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THE  
FOUNDATION

OF  
Moral Virtue

Re-consider'd and defended,

AGAINST THE  
REMARKS

OF AN  
Anonymous WRITER,

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By THOMAS MOLE. K

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LONDON.

Printed for T. Cox, at the Lamb, under the Royal  
Exchange; and R. Ford, at the Angel, in the  
Poultry, over against the Compter. M.DCC.XXXII.

{Price ONE SHILLING.}

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MORSE

Recommending and defending

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# THE FOUNDATION

## OF Moral Virtue

Re-considered and defended.

**I** AM called upon to re-consider and defend a Sermon and Preface, which I published, relating to the Foundation of Moral Virtue. In entering on this Subject it will be necessary to represent to the Reader, in plain Terms, what is the Subject of the present Enquiry; and lay open to View, the State of the Controversy which has been occasioned by it.

There are three distinct Opinions maintained upon this Head.

Some derive the Nature of moral Good and Evil; from the mere *Will*, and arbitrary *Pleasure*, of the first Cause.

A 2

Others

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Others from his *Nature* and *moral Perfections*, or from his *Will*, as necessarily determin'd by them.

Others assert, That moral Good and Evil are originally and eternally different in themselves, naturally and necessarily what they are, independent of all Will, or positive Appointment whatever.

As to the first, it is the Opinion of some Writers, that the Difference between moral Good and Evil ariseth solely from the arbitrary Will and Pleasure of God, even so, as that God might have made the whole System of what are now called Vices or Crimes, and which are as such forbidden us, the Matter of his Commands and of our Obedience, and have order'd us to shun the Practice of every Thing which is now made Duty and Virtue, as the worst Infection; and that he might have connected the Happiness and Misery of all moral Agents, and the Marks and Tokens of his Favour and Displeasure, to the Reverse of what they are at present annexed to. And if the Nature of Virtue and Vice were thus convertible into one another, and the Rewards and Punishments subjoined to them might have changed Sides, it evidently follows, that the Consciences of moral Agents must have been framed in a different Manner, suitable to this extraordinary Difference in the Law, which is made the sole Guide and Rule of them. As all Obligation is by this Sort of Writers built upon Happiness and Misery only, the Perfection and Excellence of all created, moral Agents, must have been proportionable to their different Attainments, in what is now made Wicked.

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Wickedness, and they would have been laid under all possible Obligation to the Practice of it. <sup>a</sup> *Here it is* (says this Writer himself, who does not go into this absurd Opinion) *that what they call moral Obligation, in the strict and proper Sense, doth lie.*

It was against this Principle, that the Sermon, which has occasioned the Remarks, was principally intended; and the Author's Design being to show the Falshood and Absurdity of it, it was necessary, and therefore just in him to speak of the *Will of God* as standing for *sole Pleasure*, without which it would have been impossible for him to have refuted it. What therefore this Writer intends, by making a Remark (*Rem. 3.*) against speaking of the *Will of God* as signifying *sole Pleasure*, and calling it a Remark upon the Sermon, which was intended to show the Folly and Absurdity of it, and does it almost in every Page, is not easily to be imagined. This, compared with what he says under the <sup>b</sup> sixth Remark, may lead some careless Readers to imagine, as if the Sermon had espoused this Sense of the Divine Will, whereas in every Place where it is used in the Sermon for *sole Pleasure*, it is always a Representation of the Opinion which the Author of it is refuting, who always speaks and thinks of it as one of the greatest Absurdities to suppose *such a Will* in God.

<sup>c</sup> *Here the Sermon is charged with representing all those who make the Will of God the Foundation of Moral Virtue, as having the same Narrowness and Absurdity of Thought with those who*

<sup>a</sup> Page 10.

<sup>b</sup> Page 49, 50.

<sup>c</sup> Page 42.



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mean nothing more by the *Divine Will* than *sole Pleasure*. But both in the Passage quoted by this Writer to prove this, and through the whole Sermon, the Author of it argues against making the *Divine Will* the Foundation of Moral Virtue, only in that *single Sense* of it, as it stands for *sole Pleasure*; and has such Persons alone in view, who mean that, and nothing but that, by the *Divine Will*, placing the Foundation of moral Virtue in nothing but sole and arbitrary Pleasure: Any other Sense of the Divine Will is never argued against under that Title through the whole Sermon, for the Persons who make the Will of God, as govern'd by the moral Perfections of his Nature, to be the Foundation of Virtue, do not in effect make the Divine Will the Foundation of it, but the Divine Nature, and as such their Opinion is mentioned in the Sermon, Page 24. but as a distinct Branch of the Controversy, which was not intended to be at large discussed, and is therefore only briefly touch'd upon, and in that Place only: This Writer, who appears to be of this Opinion, That the Divine Will, as influenced by the moral Perfections of the Divine Nature, is the Foundation of Virtue, frequently resolves the Foundation of it into the Divine Will; but such Divine Will is never once argued against through the whole Sermon under that Title, but only as signifying *sole Pleasure*. Whether therefore this be a true; or a false Charge, and the Sense of the Sermon be represented or misrepresented in it, I leave with the intelligent Reader to judge.

The next Charge laid against the Sermon is, that I there quote a certain *Definition of Sin* with

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a manifest slight, which will nevertheless continue a very good one, and perhaps the best that can be given. But what is this manifest Slight of this Definition complain'd of? Why, no more than not acquiescing in it as a perfect and complete one; there was nothing more intended in mentioning it; nothing said that can possibly be rack'd to signify more than this. And, why must this be called *slighting*, and *manifestly slighting* it, by this Writer? If no more can be made of it than this, and I am persuaded nothing more can, I cannot help but look upon this as fighting with an unfair Weapon, taking a mean and inglorious Advantage of his Adversary, and casting a popular Odium upon what he opposes; whereas, I am not afraid to declare, that I look upon it as a Deference due indeed to the Word of God, but *due only to that*, not to dare to differ from it. This Writer adds, that *nevertheless it will continue a very good one, and perhaps the best that can be given.* This I acknowledge to be a very true Observation, though this Writer will excuse me, if I a little doubt the Pertinency or Importance of it, that any Definition that is only *quoted* or *slighted*, will *nevertheless* continue a very good one, and, perhaps, the best that can be given.

It is objected —, that the *Writers who vent such Stuff should be below our Notice, at least below the Notice of the Pulpit.* But as it is scarce possible, that any Writer should run into such rash Assertions, unless driven by force, compelled by their necessary Connexion with the Principles they hold; and as nothing can be more fatal to real Virtue, more dishonourable to God, and dangerous and

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destructive to Mankind, than the embracing such kind of Doctrine as this, it cannot be amiss to argue the Unreasonableness of it, and the Falseness of those Principles from which it necessarily flows. And there are not wanting more considerable Writers, than those who make this Objection, who have thought it fit to take Notice of, and attempt to refute it. *Curcellæus*, who was a very learned and elegant Writer, in his Treatise *De jure Dei in Creaturas innocentes*,<sup>a</sup> endeavours to confute these pernicious Principles, as they were just then published by *Jobannes Szydlovius*, who, he tells us, had learn'd them in the School of *Mac-covius*; and speaking of *Amyraldus*, says, that it would be more worthy of him to employ his Pen in such a Cause as this, than those in which he was then not irreputably engaged. The learned Dr. *Cudworth* has collected a Number of Expressions of this kind, both out of the ancient and modern Writers, who have asserted this Opinion, and tells us that from hence<sup>b</sup>, his Treatise concerning eternal and immutable Morality, which has lately been published, took its rise. I cannot therefore easily persuade my self, upon this Wri-

<sup>a</sup> *Curcel. Op. pag. 742.* Pauca hæc è plurimis, quibus libellus ille scatet, non tantum absurdis sed & blasphemis opinionibus, excerpere visum est, in exemplum doctrinæ quæ Academiæ *Prætoriana* pulpita personant, & ut ostendam quantas in *Maccovio* suo (ibidem Theologiæ professore, ex cujus institutione ista hausit *Szydlovius*) camelos deglutire potuerint Dordraceni patres, qui adeo scrupulose vel minimos culices in remonstrantibus percolant. Gratulor Academiæ *Salmurienis* quod ab ea ejusmodi portenta exsulent, & ut æternis oblivionis tenebris illic sepulta maneant, Deum supplex oro. Sperare libet *Amyraldum* deinceps adversus ea ingenii & facundiæ suæ vires potius exerturum, quam in eos quibus nihil quod pietati & gloriæ divinæ ullo repugnet modo objicere potest.

<sup>b</sup> *Cudworth's Treatise, page 13;*



ter's Authority, that such Principles as these, which strike at the very Root of Moral Virtue, ought thus to be neglected and disregarded, but think it rather becoming such, who have a due Regard to it, to discover the Falshood and Blasphemy of such Tenets, which could they be proved true, would destroy the very Being, or possibility of Virtue, in the Universe.

There are others who state their Opinion, concerning the Ground or Foundation of Moral Virtue, in a different manner, not making the *Will of God*, as signifying *arbitrary and sole Pleasure*, but as it is *guided and determined by his Nature, or moral Attributes*, to be the Foundation thereof. And as this is in reality to resolve it ultimately into the Nature of God, so these Writers speak of them indifferently; sometimes making the Nature of God to be the Ground and Foundation of it, and sometimes his Will, meaning by Will such as is ever necessarily determined by his Nature. Upon my thus stating this Opinion the Remarker says, *"Mr. M— himself is conscious, that his talk about mere Will is too mean to pass off without adding something concerning the Nature of God.* If he means by this, that the Supposal of such a Will in God is an Absurdity too mean to pass off, it is no more than what Mr. M— is conscious of, and endeavoured in his whole Sermon to prove; but if he means, that if Mr. M— had added nothing concerning the Nature of God, he was conscious he should not do Justice to the Principles he was refuting, it is absolutely false; for those who assert what he argues against through the whole Sermon, add nothing con-

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cerning the Divine Nature, in speaking of the Foundation of Moral Virtue, but derive all from mere arbitrary Will and sole Pleasure, irrespectively to the Nature of God at all. If he means any Thing else by it, it is incumbent on him to show the Pertinency of this Remark. For, what Occasion could Mr. M— be conscious that there was, to add any Thing concerning the Divine Nature, in representing, or in refuting the Opinion of those, who in stating the Foundation of Moral Virtue have no regard to the Divine Nature, but found and fix it in arbitrary Will, and mere Pleasure alone? Since therefore it was only intended to refute their Opinion, who lay the Foundation of moral Virtue in mere Will, without adding any Thing concerning the Nature of God, it might very well *have passed off* as a Refutation of *such Principles*, which was all it was intended for, provided that there were any Writers who held such Principles, and that this was, what it pretended to be, a Refutation of them; either of which, when this Writer denies, I am ready to undertake the Proof of.

In the Sermon I had thus expressed my self, in regard to this State of the Question, <sup>a</sup> *Some indeed conceive of the Divine Nature as prior to the Divine Will, and speak of that as a Rule for the Divine Being to go by in issuing forth his Precepts and Laws.* And upon this the Remarker cries out, <sup>b</sup> *But who are they that make the Divine Nature prior to the Divine Will? Who are they that make this prior Nature without the Will, or the Will without the Nature (i. e. the Attri-*

<sup>a</sup> *Serm.* Page 24.

<sup>b</sup> *Rem.* Page 50.

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butes) a Rule for the Divine Being to go by? No sensible Writer, no watchful, diligent Writer, ever did either of these. And he assures his Readers, that I either here <sup>a</sup> represent my Opposers wrong, or take my Account from the meanest and most confused Writers.

But notwithstanding this surprizingly modest Assertion, it still appears to me, that many sensible, watchful, diligent Writers, have not only asserted this Thing, but made use also of the very Words in which I have expressed it; and that I have not either misrepresented them, or chosen out the meanest and most confused of them, but fairly given the very Sense and Words of some considerable Writers, of unexceptionable Character and Capacity.

Whoever looks into Vorstius's Book *De Deo*, will there meet with this Principle thus stated by him, in innumerable Places. I would here present the Reader with the following Citations. <sup>b</sup> *Natura enim Dei veluti regula & mensura est libera ipsius voluntatis, non contra, voluntas naturæ. Siquidem ordine naturæ prius est bonum esse quam bonum velle & facere, sicut bona arbor prior est bono fructu, & quælibet causa, suo effectu.* This he expresses more at large in this and the following Sections; and in his Notes on this Disputation he thus expresses his Sense of this Matter. <sup>c</sup> *Itaq; primam ac præcipuam immo unicam regulam justæ voluntatis in Deo, esse justissimam Dei naturam, ad quam voluntas illa necessario ac perpetuo sese con-*

<sup>a</sup> Rem. Page 50.

<sup>b</sup> Vorst. *De Deo*, *Disput.* VI. Page 66.

<sup>c</sup> Vorst. Not. in *Disp.* Page 373.



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*formare solet.* And again, <sup>a</sup> *Nam Dei voluntas non aliter regula justitiæ censeri debet, quam boni grammatici aut docti rhetoris oratio pro regula bene loquendi aut bene dicendi haberi solet.* Curcellæus speaks to the same Purpose, <sup>b</sup> *Absurdum, autem non est voluntate Dei, quatenus non pro facultate, sed pro libero volendi actu accipitur, naturam Dei priorem statuere, quæ necessaria est, Et cui voluntas, ut justa sit, conformis esse debet.* Limborch also states his Opinion of this Matter thus. <sup>c</sup> *Dices, voluntas Dei est prima actionum nostrarum regula, alias quid daretur bonum antecedenter ad voluntatem Dei. Resp. nihil esse absurdi, si dicamus naturam divinam priorem esse voluntate divina, imo naturam prius concipi necesse est, ante liberum volendi actum qui a natura procedit, dicimus ergo ipsam naturæ divinæ sanctitatem voluntatis esse regulam, ac proinde nihil Deum velle posse quod sanctissimæ ipsius naturæ repugnat, quæ cum sit plane immutabilis, etiam honesti ac illi contrarii turpis naturas esse æternas Et immutabiles.*

It is no Mark of *Watchfulness* and *Caution* to say of an Opinion that does not happen to please, that no *sensible, watchful, or diligent Writer*, hath ever owned or appeared in defence of it, nor will it, I fear, be esteemed an Instance of *Judgment* or *Modesty* for any Man to take upon him to say, that *Vorstius, Curcellæus, and Limborch*, were inconsiderable or mean, unskillful, or careless Writers.

It may not, perhaps, be amiss, to observe to the Reader, that all these learned Writers build

<sup>a</sup> Vorst. Not. in Disp. Page 374.

<sup>b</sup> Instit. lib. III. cap. 12. Sect. 15.

<sup>c</sup> Theol. Christ. lib. II. cap. 12. Sect. 21.

this their Hypothesis upon those Words of St. Paul, 2 Tim. ii. 13. *If we believe not yet he abideth faithful, he cannot deny himself.* They imagine the Apostle to assert here, that the moral Perfections of God, flow necessarily from his Essence, and exist by the same absolute Necessity as that does; and that his Will is necessarily governed and determined by these, so that to act unreasonably in any Instance would be to *deny himself*, and go contrary to his Nature, which carries in it the same Absurdity, as to suppose a Being which is necessarily existent to be capable of not existing. But the Apostle is not there speaking of the Rule, or Measure of the Divine Will; nor is he describing the Foundation of Moral Virtue; neither, indeed, is he speaking of God at all, for in the preceding Context he is exhorting *Timothy* to endure with Patience the Sufferings which his steadfast Adherence to the Christian Religion, and his faithful Preaching of it, would certainly expose him to; and encourages him to it, from the Consideration of the Glorious Reward which will at length crown all his Labours and Sufferings. He bids him remember the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, as that which would at once furnish his Mind with a most Glorious Example for his present Conduct, and convincing Proof, as well as comfortable Prospect, of his future Reward. And the Words of the Apostle, from the ninth Verse, may be thus paraphrased.

Ver. 9. "I exhort you not to conflict with any  
" Difficulties which I my self am fearful of, and  
" shun, for I am at present bound in Chains, and  
" confined at *Rome*, and being thus treated like  
" a guilty Malefactor, I am no doubt judged and  
" esteem-

*2<sup>d</sup> moral Ob-  
-jection of God  
-that not exist-  
-ing from his  
-essence; nor do  
-they exist by  
-some absolute  
-necessity in his  
-essence. See  
-vid. pag. 17.*

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“esteemed so by many; but though they are  
“able to confine my Person, yet they have it  
“not in their Power to smother or stifle the  
“glorious Doctrine which I am chosen to  
“preach.

*Ver. 10.* “For I am not terrified either by my  
“Bonds and Confinement, or all that Ignominy  
“and Disgrace which I endure, from publishing  
“and spreading it, both by my Discourses and  
“Epistles, which as it has been all my Care, so  
“it is all my Crime; and as it is on this, and no  
“other Account, that I am at present under such  
“Confinement and Disgrace, so I cheerfully sub-  
“mit to it, hoping, that however Grievous it is  
“to my self, it may be of Service to those who  
“are elected, either in this or in after Ages, by  
“the Favour of God, to the Enjoyment of the  
“Gospel, by confirming them in the Belief of  
“it, and helping them to obtain that Salvation  
“of Christ which consists in their Recovery from  
“Sin to Virtue, and will conduct them safely in-  
“to eternal Glory.

*Ver. 11.* “Nothing is more sure, and as such  
“nothing is more constantly to be thought on,  
“or more certainly to be relied on, under all  
“our Sufferings, than that eternal Glory shall  
“succeed and reward them; for after we have  
“born such a Resemblance to the Death of Christ,  
“as consists in a Deliverance and Release from  
“Sin, we shall bear a Conformity to him in  
“the Glory of his Resurrection and Life in  
“Heaven.

*Ver. 12.* “And if, when the declaring his Do-  
“ctrine, or discharging our Duty, brings us un-  
“avoidably



“ avoidably into Disgrace or Suffering, as it did  
“ him, we shall patiently submit, and constant-  
“ ly endure it, as he did before us, we shall  
“ join in the Joy of the general Judgment, and  
“ share the Glory of his eternal Reign. But if,  
“ when we find, that either the preaching, or  
“ professing, or practice of his Doctrine, will  
“ expose us to Disgrace or Affliction in the  
“ World, we, on that Account, abandon and  
“ deny him before Men, he will as surely dis-  
“ own us in the Day of Trial, and refuse us Ad-  
“ mission into his heavenly Kingdom.

*Ver. 13.* “ And this our Unbelief, though  
“ it will be so fatal to our selves, will no ways  
“ reflect any Dishonour upon Christ, in cau-  
“ sing him to violate the Promises he has  
“ made, or be any Detriment to such of his  
“ Servants as are faithful and persevere, in dis-  
“ appointing them of their Hope and Enjoy-  
“ ment; for Christ, who is the Author of those  
“ glorious Promises, will punctually observe  
“ them, and will not falsify, or go from his  
“ Word.”

I have been thus large in giving the Sense of these Words, because ● is the only Proof brought from Scripture, by all these Writers, for the Support of their Hypothesis.

There are others who are of Opinion, that Moral Good and Evil are originally and eternally different, and in Nature necessarily what they are, not possibly changeable or convertible into one another, but fixed and unvariable as absolute Necessity can make them. These assert, that Moral Good has intrinsically an Excellence and

Amiable-

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Amiability which makes it preferable to Moral Evil, is the natural Motive of Action to all intelligent Agents, and the Ground or Reason of the moral Perfections of the first Cause, who must for this Reason be necessarily and transcendently perfect in every moral Virtue, because he can neither be ignorant of it, nor with-held by any superior Power from pursuing it; nor can have any possible Reason or Motive which can induce him knowingly and wilfully to act contrary to it. Here the abstract Nature of moral Virtue is evidently consider'd, without any View to God at all as the Cause of it, but as being naturally, necessarily, and unchangeably what it is, the Object of God's Knowledge, the Rule of his Actions, the Reason of his Choice, but not any Effect flowing from either his Nature, or his Will, as the Cause of it.

*Of the Foundation of Moral Virtue*

### S E C T. II.

**T**HE moral Attributes of God are not self-evident Truths, but are capable of, and require Demonstration and Proof, and are impossible to be proved but by this moral Difference of Things as a Medium; whereas this necessary and unalterable Difference of moral Good and Evil, is a Truth which forces it self unavoidably upon the Minds of all such as are capable of the Ideas of them, and is therefore to be made our first Principle in all our Enquiries concerning Virtue or Morality.

The same may be argued concerning the moral Perfections of God as concerning his Divine Essence.

*2. moral Pr-  
ficiency of God  
impossible to be  
proved but by  
moral Difference  
of things. vid. infra  
pag. 26.*

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lence. If there be no necessary Ground of his Existence, antecedently to all Supposition of Existence, but he exists absolutely, without any Ground or Reason of Existence at all, it will unavoidably follow, that he may as well cease to exist, without any Ground or Reason of ceasing to exist; so also, if there be no necessary Ground or Reason why he is just, and good, and true, but he is just, and good, and true, without any Ground or Reason of his being so, it will as unavoidably follow, that he may as well cease to be just, and good, and true, without any Ground or Reason of his ceasing to be so; and in both Cases, whatever is the true Reason, why the first Cause can never possibly cease to exist, nor ever possibly cease to be just, and good, and true, the same is the true Reason why he always did, and cannot but at present exist; and why he always was, and cannot possibly but be just, and good, and true.

But the same absolute Necessity which is the Ground of his Existence, cannot be the Ground of his moral Attributes, but the objective Excellence and Reasonableness of all moral Good, abstractly consider'd, and the infinite Understanding which the first Cause and Author of all Things has of it. This is the Ground or Reason why God always wills such Actions as are reasonable and fit, and not absolute Necessity, which, instead of being the Ground of moral Perfection in God, is absolutely inconsistent with it; for if the moral Perfections of God were necessary in the same Sense as his Existence, or his natural Perfections are, there would be the same Reason to give Thanks to him for his Existence, or mere Perceptions, Intelligence or Knowledge, as for his

C

Justice,

*450*  
*3 Expressed as*  
*from 7 1000*  
*merit of his*  
*in his Attributes*  
*as 2 actual*  
*possibility of God*  
*as 4 1000*  
*as 1000*  
*most perfect*



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Justice, or Goodness, or Truth; and yet no one makes the former of these the Matter of Thanksgiving to God, whilst all with the utmost Readiness and Reason make the others so; and the Reason of this can be no other, than because the former are absolutely necessary, without any Interposure or Efficiency of the Will, while the others are the voluntary and the free Effects of his Will, chosen for their natural Excellency and Fitness, in opposition to their Contraries.

*The Will of God  
is governed  
by his moral  
Perfections  
but by a just  
-wise understanding  
-ing, & it is not  
-tence of his  
moral Perfection*

It is, I know, generally said, that the Will of God is governed by his moral Perfections of Justice, and Truth, and Goodness, and Mercy; but if we nearly look into the Nature of these moral Perfections, and enquire what is meant by them, we shall probably find, that this is not so satisfactory as it may at first appear to be; for the Justice, and Goodness, and Truth of God, rightly consider'd, are the Actions of the Divine Being, and as such take their Rise in the Divine Will, which is the immediate Principle or Cause of them, acting under the Direction of an infinite Understanding; Intelligence and Agency being essentially necessary to the Idea of moral Perfection in God. The Source and Seat of the moral Perfections of God are in his Understanding and Will, or that Intelligence and active Power and Principle wherein the Essence of Liberty lies, and wherein alone a Capacity for Virtue or moral Perfection consists. And that these spring hence, and are to be resolved into these as their proper Source, appears clear and plain from this Consideration, that were not the first Cause an intelligent, active Being, all those Perfections would be so many Impossibilities, as having no Foundation in an unintelligent, unactive Nature or Essence.

It

It will be pretended, perhaps, that *these moral Perfections* are to be consider'd by us as so many *Dispositions* of the Divine Being, which are to be distinguished from his *Actions*; that the Ideas of these are antecedent in Nature, and in our Minds, to that of his Will, and are what his Will is always necessarily determined by, and that the *Actions* of God are the exercise and particular Exertions only, of those moral Perfections. But in answer to this let it be consider'd, that either by *Dispositions* is meant such Tendencies to act in God, as are necessary in the same Sense of absolute Necessity by which he exists, mere physical Propensities, and then all the Effects of them must be necessary, and nothing could possibly have been different from what it is, any more than it is possible for him not to have existed, since the same Necessity must operate alike in both cases. Or else by *Dispositions* is meant *the constant and steady, though free Manner of the first Causes acting according to the fixed and immutable Rectitude of his Divine Will*, and so they signify no more than the *Actions* of God, considered as an intelligent and active Being. In this latter Sense alone the Nature of moral Perfection consists; and if we resolve the Virtue or Moral Perfection of God into such an absolute Necessity, as that by which his Substance or Essence exists, we take away the Possibility of it in God, Intelligence and Liberty being as necessary to the Notion of God's moral Perfection, as is his Existence it self.

*if Moral Per-  
fection is  
not an act  
of Liberty  
then it is  
not an act  
of the  
Divine Being.*

The *Physical Cause* of the Divine *Action* is not the *Understanding* or *perceptive Faculty*, since a Capacity of Perception may exist separate from the Capacity of Action. Nor is it the *reasonableness* and *fitness* of the *Action*, since Reasons and Mo-

*Physical Cause  
of Divine act-  
ion is not  
understanding  
nor  
reasonableness  
nor  
fitness of  
action;*

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tives are mere abstract Notions, and can only be the Occasions of Action, but can have no physical, necessary Connection with, or be the efficient Causes of it. Nor is it any *absolute Necessity* of Nature, since an Action proceeding from absolute Necessity of Nature is a Contradiction in Terms. But the *physical Cause* of the Divine Action is the *self-motive Power*, the *Will*, the *active Faculty*, which inheres in God the *Agent* himself; without this there can be no *Agent*, no *Action*, no *moral Perfection* in the World.

If it should be objected here, that this destroys the Necessity of the moral Perfections of God, and seems to represent him at liberty to choose another Course of Action, and assume a Character contrary to this, instead of being Just and Good, and True, to become unjust, malicious, false and treacherous, it may be replied, that God ever was, and is necessarily in these, and in every other respect morally perfect, and that it is impossible he should in any future Time change or cease from being so; but then this is to be understood of such a Necessity as is suitable to the Nature, and consistent with the Idea of moral Perfection; that is, such as can consist with an intelligent and active Nature, and no way destroys the Liberty of the Divine Actions, whereas it appears pretty plain and evident, such an absolute Necessity as that which is the Ground and Reason of the Existence of the first Cause, can never be assigned as the Ground and Reason of his Actions, consistent with the Liberty of them; for then we might as well apply the Idea of Liberty to his Existence, as to his Actions, to which it has apparently no such Agreement; God would then exist as freely as he acts, or act as necessarily as he exists; which

Pro-

now any also.  
has nothing  
of necessity  
but will.

This does not  
destroy the  
-essence of  
the will  
-being of God;  
it binds him as  
to his nature  
and actions  
and he is  
necessarily



Propositions are palpably repugnant to Reason and Truth, and introduce an absolute Fatality, to which the first, equally, with all second Causes, would be subjected.

The Necessity of God's moral Perfection arises from the Perfection of his moral Capacity, and the immutable Rectitude of his Will, he having a perfect Knowledge of the intimate Natures and Essences of Things, his Power being subject to no check or controul, nor his Will under the Influence of any unreasonable Affections, there hence arises a Necessity not *natural* but *moral*, that he should always be just, and good, and true, and an impossibility not *natural* but *moral*, that he should ever change, or cease to act thus. Where there is such an infinite moral Capacity, it is impossible but that an infinitely perfect moral Character must ensue, because that will exhibit infinite Reason and Ground for such a Choice to the Divine Will, whilst there cannot possibly appear any Motive at all for a contrary one; there will arise therefore from this moral Necessity the same Certainty of the Effect, as if it was by an absolute Necessity of Nature. This is what I meant, when I said, that *God is at liberty to act according to Reason and Truth*; that he does not act thus by an absolute Necessity of Nature, but from Liberty and Choice; and, that there is no superior Power that can prevent him from acting thus, but that as his Perceptions are perfectly conformable to the Nature of their Objects, so his Will always freely determines it self to such Actions as he perceives to be naturally and unalterably good. This the Remarker says, *Is to talk of*

where arises  
a necessity of  
God's moral  
Perfection, viz.  
from the immen-  
se faculty of his  
understanding  
of his will.  
where arises  
not a natural  
but a moral  
necessity of his  
acting thus  
from the nature  
of his will.

if I have said  
that God is  
at liberty to  
act according  
to Reason and  
Truth, it  
must be  
from his  
Nature  
Perfection.

## 22 The Foundation of Moral Virtue

*know not what.* Perhaps not; but, what then? He does not, I hope, think it impossible for any one else to understand it because he does not. That the Idea of *Liberty*, or the *Power of acting*, is consistent with such moral Necessity as I have just been speaking of, is owned and allowed, though it will be hard to show how it can consist with absolute Necessity of Nature. There seems an evident Propriety in saying, that God is free in the Exercise of Justice, Goodness and Truth, but none in saying, that he exists freely; that he is freely eternal or immense; these are by such absolute Necessity of Nature as exclude all possibility of Freedom, and are inconsistent with the Idea of it; and if God was Just, and Good, and True; by the same Necessity there would be the same Repugnancy with the Idea of Liberty in these as in the other. There is therefore a wide Difference between *natural* and *moral Necessity*, which by not attending to, some Writers asserting in the former Sense, the Necessity of God's moral Perfections, destroy the Nature of them, and sap the Foundations of all Virtue and Religion.

Mr. M— is charged with what this Writer calls an "unscriptural, unphilosophical Assertion, That God is not necessarily Just, and Good, and True. But surely he does, or ought to know, that all watchful Writers on this Argument, ever distinguish between *absolute* and *moral Necessity*; and though they deny the Necessity of God's moral Perfections in the former Sense of *absolute* and *physical Necessity*, as that which would at once destroy the Nature or Possibility of them, yet unanimously,

<sup>a</sup> See Rem. 7. throughout.

and

Liberty of  
action  
is not  
such moral  
necessity.

2. I gave the  
possibility of  
the  
foundation  
of  
virtue  
is not  
such moral  
necessity.

*Re-considered and defended.* 23

and in the strongest Terms, assert and prove the Necessity of them in the latter Sense of *moral Necessity*, which is the only possible Sense in which Necessity can consist with Liberty, and consequently with the Idea of *moral Perfection*.

And no other Necessity of God's moral Perfections will Dr. Clarke be found ever pleading for; he is otherwise, indeed, either understood or represented by the Remarker; thus he writes<sup>a</sup>, *In discoursing on the moral Attributes of God, a Protruder of his Will ought carefully to avoid all Suggestions of their not being necessary, even though he should think that the moral Difference of Things is previous to the Will of God. Dr. Clarke, notwithstanding his arguing for the Nature of Things antecedent to the Will of God, yet has carefully proved, that the supreme Cause and Author of all Things must of Necessity be a Being of infinite Goodness, Justice, and Truth, and all other moral Perfections*<sup>b</sup>.

But whether the Remarker has duly attended to it or no, Dr. Clarke in all his Writings carefully distin-

<sup>a</sup> Rem. Page 51.

<sup>b</sup> *Demonstration of the Being and Attributes of God*, Prop. 12.

<sup>c</sup> Dr. Clarke's *Serm. Wisdom of God*, Vol. I. Page 279. Therefore every Action of God must of Necessity (meaning in the moral Sense of the word Necessity) be what is absolutely and in it self, and in the whole, most wise.

*Serm. Goodness of God*, Vol. I. Page 319. And yet even this Necessity (of God's being Good) arising wholly from the unalterable Rectitude of his Will) whereas his natural Attributes, such as Knowledge and Power, arise immediately from absolute Necessity of Nature.

*Demonst. Being and Attrib.* Prop. 12. Page 107. 'Tis evident he must of Necessity (meaning not a Necessity of Fate, but such a moral Necessity as I before said was consistent with the most perfect Liberty) do always what he knows to be fittest to be done.



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distinguishes between *absolute* and *moral* Necessity. Does he not constantly assert, that his *moral Perfections* are necessary in the Sense of *moral Necessity*,

*Rem. upon a Phil. Enq. into Human Liberty, Page 31. Again, Is it not also a Perfection in him to will and do always what is best? This is Mr. Collins's Question; Dr. Clarke answers, Yes, but not to do so by a physical Necessity, because that is not a Perfection, but a Contradiction in Terms. Whatever is physically Necessary is no Action neither in God nor in any other Being.*

*Dr. Clarke's Sec. Lett. at the End of a Collection of Papers between Mr. Leibnitz and him. Again, you plainly confound moral Contradiction and moral Necessity, with natural Contradiction and natural Necessity. 'Tis indeed a Contradiction in Terms, morally speaking, that a wise Man should do a foolish Thing, or an honest Man a dishonest Thing; but 'tis no Contradiction in Physicks. And in God himself, were his doing Acts of Goodness and Mercy as physically necessary as his being Omnipresent, 'twould be as absurd to thank him for doing good, as for being Omnipresent. Wherefore were the moral Perfections of God necessary (in the same physical Sense as the natural Attributes are, which have no Dependence on his Will or Power of Action) they would not be moral Perfections at all.*

*See also the end of his Answer to the third Letter.*

*God always discerns and approves what is just and good necessarily, and cannot do otherwise; but he always acts or does what is just and good freely; that is, having at the same Time a full natural or physical Power of acting differently; otherwise Justice (for Example) in God would be nothing different from Justice in a Sword, when it executes a just Sentence, supposing the Sword to perceive what 'tis doing, and yet cannot help doing it. The Consequence whereof is, that there could not possibly be in God any moral Perfection at all. For every Thing that is of a moral Nature implies in the very Notion or Essence of it, the doing of something which at the same Time was in the Agent's Power not to have done. Moral Necessity therefore is distinguished from physical Necessity, just as all other Figures of Speech are from literal Expressions, that is, 'tis in Truth, and philosophically speaking, no Necessity at all. And yet every one easily sees, that the Justice and Goodness of an infinitely perfect free Agent may as firmly and reasonably be relied on, as the necessary Effect of any necessary Agent, is known to be physically unavoidable.*

and

And of that alone. Does he not directly deny them to be necessary in the former Sense of *absolute Necessity*, and assert, that it is inconsistent with their Nature that they should? Nay, does he not in the very demonstration of that article, explain himself of such a *moral Necessity* as is, and alone is consistent with *Liberty*? Where then is the Pertinency or Fairness of this Remark? I appeal to the candid and impartial Reader, whether this quotation be not brought by him, as it lies in the Remarks, on purpose to prove that Mr. M. denies the necessity of God's moral Perfection, in the sense in which Dr. Clarke had asserted it. And yet in the Preface to the Sermon, it is carefully said, *That God is not necessarily just, and good, and true; in the same sense, viz. from a Necessity of Nature, as he is eternal, and powerful, and omnipresent.* And in the Sermon it is denied in the sense only, in which Power, and Knowledge, and Eternity; of which the author is there speaking, are necessary; that is, from an *absolute Necessity of Nature*, and not *moral Necessity*; between which there is the *widest Difference*; though this writer, it seems, is yet to learn it. Is it not, therefore, plain, that to make God a *necessary Agent in his moral Character*; that is, to make him *act* by the same *absolute Necessity* by which he *exists*, is, to destroy the *freedom* necessary to a *moral Agent*? And yet this writer tells us, that he is of the contrary Sentiment to that express'd in the Sermon; and asserts<sup>a</sup>, that God is *as necessarily good, and just, and true, and faithful*; as he is necessarily intelligent and self-existent. And whereas he adds, that this cannot be denied, without saying that moral Perfections are not so necessary as natural

<sup>a</sup> Rem. pag. 52.

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Perfections to the Being of a God, this I am afraid will show little Judgment in the Controversy, since the Consequence is accepted, asserted, and proved, *ex professo*, that moral Perfections are not, cannot possibly be *so necessary*; i. e. by an absolute Necessity of Nature, as natural Perfections are to the Being of a God; though they are necessary, *suo modo*, as has been explained. This is a Part of the Remarks, which it is the greatest Tenderness not to treat with the greatest Severity.

However, since this Writer is so confident that the essential justice, goodness, holiness, blessedness, and truth of God, are the Foundation of all moral Differences of Things. I would put him upon trying if he can prove the moral Perfections of God, without making use of this moral Difference of Things, as a Medium of it. If he can help us to a Demonstration of the certain and necessary truth of the moral Attributes of the first cause, without supposing this natural, necessary, and eternal Difference of Things, he will throw considerable Light upon this intricate argument, and do what no one has ever yet been able to do before him. For what Proof have we of the moral Attributes of God, but what is entirely built upon this, as the Principle and Foundation of it? If there was no such natural Difference in Things, the first Cause might possibly, and as probably be an infinitely ill, as an infinitely good being; and Actions every way the reverse of what we now ascribe to him, would be call'd by us his moral Perfections. Therefore it was that I said this was the Foundation upon which our Knowledge of the

Nature

2 moral Per-  
fections of God  
are not the  
Foundation of  
moral Differences  
of Things.

How many the  
natural moral  
Differences of Things  
are the Foundation of  
the moral Perfections  
of God, and the  
Foundation of our  
Knowledge of the  
Nature



*Nature and Will of God is built;* against which, though this Writer has said nothing, as I can find, which has the Force of an Argument, I shall endeavour to illustrate and prove it.

There are some Propositions which contain eternal, necessary, and unchangeable Truths, both of the natural and moral kind, which are not the Effects of, or any ways owing to the Will of God; otherwise there could be no such things as natural Contradictions, or moral Impossibilities; to which the Power and Will of God could not extend, which yet all allow. Such are these Propositions, nothing can be made to exist and not exist at the same time; nothing can be made not to have existed, after it has existed. So also it is unreasonable and unrighteous for any one Being, to inflict extreme and eternal Misery upon a perfectly innocent and obedient Creature. These Truths may be consider'd abstractly and irrespectively to their actually subsisting in any created Natures or Existences, or even to the Ideas of them existing in any Mind; insomuch that those Propositions would be true, though there were no such particular Natures or Existences in being, by which they could be illustrated, or any particular Minds, by which the Ideas of them could be formed. When therefore it is said that these Truths are previous to, and independent on the Will of God, no more is meant than this; that it is not the Will of God which causes them to be Truths, though his Will is the sole Cause of their actual Existence in any created Nature, and of the Ideas of them being formed in any created Mind. The Will of God is the sole Cause of both, but the abstract Truth is entirely distinct from both; and has no Dependance either upon

*Y. rational & necessary diff. of the Will of God & the Will of Man*

*Y. above I said the Will of God is the sole Cause of the actual Existence in any created Nature, and of the Ideas of them being formed in any created Mind.*

## 28 The Foundation of Moral Virtue

the particular Natures, in which it is illustrated, or the particular Minds in which the Idea of it is formed. With regard to God himself, his Perceptions and Ideas of such Propositions are not the Causes of their being true, nor could he be supposed necessarily to perceive them true, as he indeed does, upon any other Ground or Reason but their natural, necessary, and unalterable Truth.

*this moral  
Difference of Things  
is as necessary as  
the Existence of  
God. it is not  
followed by the Exi-  
-stence of things  
as is necessary  
as the Existence of  
God.*

Wherefore it does not follow, that<sup>a</sup> to make the moral Difference of Things as necessary as the Existence of God himself, is to make the Existence of Things as necessary as the Existence of a God. For there is a very wide Difference between the abstract general Truths, and the Beings or Things which afford particular Instances and Examples of those Truths, as well as the particular Ideas which are formed of them in particular Minds. It is not said, nor can it I believe be proved, to follow from what is said, that those material Objects, in which we observe such Truths exemplified, are as necessary as the Existence of God, or at all so: Nor does it follow, that those particular Minds, in which the Ideas of such Truths are formed, or even those particular Ideas of them existing there, are as necessary as the Existence of God, or at all so. Though the abstract general Truths, of which such Beings or Things afford particular Instances, and such Minds form particular Ideas, are in Nature eternal, necessary, and unchangeable. And there would only have been fewer Instances, in which such Truths had appeared, and fewer Minds to have formed Perceptions of them, (not such Propositions have been untrue, or less true) in case such Instances and Minds had

never had any being. I shall desire the Reader to look into the Margin<sup>b</sup>, where he will find the Answer that Dr. Clarke gave to his Remarker, who objected this Consequence as following from his Principles.

It is farther objected to the foregoing Principle, *That if the Ideas of Evil are as necessary as the Ideas of Good, then Evil must exist as necessarily as Good; that is, there must be an eternal Principle of Evil, as well as of Good, according to the Doctrine of the Manichees and Paulicians.* The Ideas and Perceptions of God are all necessary, but the actual Existence of any Being or Thing, does not follow from God's necessarily having an Idea of the abstract Nature of it, as has been already observed: For if so, not only would all

*2. Does  
if King  
is  
actual Ex-  
istence  
1513*

<sup>b</sup> He says, that I am guilty my self of what I groundlessly imputed to Spinoza; viz. of making God a meer necessary Agent. Namely, by affirming that there is a necessary Difference between Good and Evil; and that there is such a thing as fitness and unfitness eternally, necessarily, and unchangeably, in the Nature and Reason of Things, antecedently to Will, and to all arbitrary or positive appointment whatsoever. This, he says, is a groundless positive Assertion, and plainly imports the eternal necessary Existence of all Things, as much as Spinoza's hypothesis does. Is not this an admirable Consequence, because I affirm the Proportions of Things, and the Differences of Good and Evil, to be eternal and necessary, that therefore I affirm the Existence of the Things themselves to be also eternal and necessary? Because I affirm the Proportion, suppose between a Sphere and a Cylinder, to be eternal and necessary, that therefore I affirm the Existence of material Spheres and Cylinders, to be likewise eternal and necessary. Because I affirm the Difference between Virtue and Vice to be eternal and necessary, that therefore I affirm, Men who practise Virtue and Vice to have existed eternally. This Accusation shews both extreme Ignorance, and great Malice in the Author of the Remarks. Dr. Clarke's Preface to his Discourse, concerning the unchangeable Obligations of Natural Religion.

<sup>a</sup> Rem, page 16, 17.

Things



### 30 *The Foundation of Moral Virtue*

Things which exist be necessarily existent, but all Possibilities must have actual Existence too. Whatever is true, God necessarily perceives to be true; whatever is possible, he necessarily perceives to be possible; whatever exists, he necessarily perceives to exist. Nothing is therefore true, because God perceives it to be true, or possible, because he perceives it to be possible, or exists, because he perceives it to exist: But on the contrary, *ex. gr.* God does not exist, and know and act, because he perceives himself to do so, but perceives himself to do so, because of his so doing. This is the Ground and Foundation of that, not that of this. In respect of other Things, it was possible this World might have been created sooner, in respect of Time; or otherwise, than it is in various and numberless respects, which Differences and Variations God necessarily had the Ideas of; and yet they did not, for that reason, take Effect. Nay, even with respect to the moral Attributes of God, they do not follow from the simple Perceptions he has of their abstract Nature, but from the joint Principles of Intelligence and Activity, wherein the moral Capacity of the first Cause consists, and to which it is that his moral Character is owing.

It is absurd therefore to suppose, that the actual Existence of any thing follows from the necessary Idea of its abstract Nature in God. The first Cause necessarily having many Ideas and Perceptions of meer Possibilities, which never will have any actual Existence. Good and Evil, morally consider'd, are the Qualities of Actions, and have their actual Existence from the free Determination of moral Agents. But that a Being of absolute and infinite Perfection in his moral

Character, may have clear Perceptions of the abstract Nature of moral Evil, even though no Evil should ever actually exist throughout all Eternity, is what, I believe, this Writer is not capable of disproving. And I am a little surpriz'd, to see him wading, as he himself confesses, out of his Depth in this Argument, and giving us this Proof of what he had asserted; <sup>a</sup> *That the Ideas of Evil being made previous to the Creation, and so existing in the Perception of God, independent of his Will, to form Creatures that should be capable of Evil, is what he is not able to write about.* And again, <sup>b</sup> *But how to talk of the Ideas of Evil, independent on the Order, and the Laws of the Creation, is, I confess, quite beyond the Reach of my Understanding.* We see how violent is the Itch of charging an Adversary with Heresy, that it can drive a Writer, purely for the sake of it, to talk about things, by his own Confession, beyond the Reach of his Understanding. Nay, I leave it to the Reader to judge, whether this Writer does not himself assert what he charges this Consequence upon. He says, <sup>c</sup> *God perfectly knows Evil, i. e. by his own Nature he perfectly knows the Opposites to every Excellency and Perfection he has in himself.* It is therefore incumbent upon him to show either that the Idea which the first Cause has of Evil, is not necessary, or else try to clear himself from his own Charge of being a Manichee or Paulician.

It is said in the fourth Remark, that we ought <sup>d</sup> *to distinguish betwixt what Moral Virtue is origi-*

<sup>a</sup> Rem. pag. 22.

<sup>b</sup> Ibid.

<sup>c</sup> pag. 24.

<sup>d</sup> pag. 44.

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ally derived from, and what in our way of reasoning it may be first argued from. That is, this moral Difference of Things, must be our first Principle, till we have proved the moral Perfections of God by it: And then these moral Perfections of God must be our first Principle, even to prove this moral Difference of Things by: That this Writer argues thus in a Circle, will appear by comparing together what lies in different Places of the Remarks. For though he here owns, <sup>a</sup> *that abstracted Propositions taken from Things, and placed in a scientific Way by themselves, may become first Principles, upon which we argue, both concerning the Nature of God, and the Nature of Things*; yet he every where else in the Remarks, makes the Nature and <sup>b</sup> *Perfections of God the Ground of the moral Difference of Things*; or *that on which the moral Difference of Things is founded*.

But thus to make this moral Difference of Things, the Proof of God's moral Perfections; and then those moral Perfections the Ground and Foundation of that moral Difference, is such a Method of arguing, as will, I believe, give little Satisfaction to reasonable Minds.

I never assert, as <sup>c</sup> 'tis insinuated that I do; <sup>a</sup> *that any such moral Propositions could ever have been formed at all, if they had not been first in the eternal Mind*. For there is a wide Difference between Truths, and Minds forming Ideas of these Truths, and framing them into Propositions; which if this Writer had consider'd and distinguish'd, he

<sup>a</sup> Rem. pag. 44.

<sup>b</sup> pag. 11, 16.

<sup>c</sup> pag. 44.



might have spared this, and many other such Representations of his Antagonist, which are scattered through the Remarks. I no where assert, let him show it if he can, <sup>d</sup> that there are any natural Relations of Persons and Things, that do not derive what they are originally from the Will of God. I know of no christian Writer so absurd as to assert this, but only that those Truths or Fitnesses of Action, which necessarily result from the Supposition of the Existence of those Relations of Persons and Things, those abstract Truths are absolutely necessary, and independent of the Will of God, and what no Will of any Being could make not to be Truths, or not to be Truths resulting from such natural Relations of Persons and Things.

The Existence of such Persons and Things, and such Relations, altogether depend upon the Will of God; there was no Necessity that they should have existed, but they are purely the Effects of the Will of the first Cause; but the Truths resulting from the Supposition of their Existence are not of an arbitrary, created, precarious Nature, but eternal, necessary, and unchangeable. This is what this Writer should have known that his Opponent held, before he undertook to answer him, and this what he should have disproved, if he would have answer'd to the Purpose. Grant but this Liberty of making one's Antagonist say what we please, and it will be easy to confute any Writer whatsoever.

It is here further objected under this Remark, That if moral Virtue is not originally derived from

<sup>d</sup> Rem. pag. 44.

<sup>e</sup> Ibid.

*Handwritten notes:*  
 natural Relations of Persons and Things, that do not derive what they are originally from the Will of God. I know of no christian Writer so absurd as to assert this, but only that those Truths or Fitnesses of Action, which necessarily result from the Supposition of the Existence of those Relations of Persons and Things, those abstract Truths are absolutely necessary, and independent of the Will of God, and what no Will of any Being could make not to be Truths, or not to be Truths resulting from such natural Relations of Persons and Things.

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*the Perfection and Will of God, it cannot be said all Things are of him ; for the very best Things, those which are eternal, immutable, and most excellent, are not of him, if Righteousness and Virtue be not. Righteousness and Virtue are Actions, and the Existence of some moral Agents or Agent, is necessary to their actual Existence. The Righteousness or Virtue of God, consider'd as his Actions are derived from his Will, and depend upon it. The Righteousness and Virtue of other moral Agents depends in part upon their Existence, and consequently so far upon the Will of God, which alone determines whether they shall exist or not. The actual Existence, therefore, of Righteousness and Virtue, the best Things in the World are not (any more than the actual Existence of any other Beings or Things) independent on the Will of God. But whether Righteousness shall be what it is, in its abstract Nature, or something different from what it is, whether the abstract Nature of moral Good and Evil, shall be changeable and convertible, or necessarily and unalterably what they are ; this is what I assert is not the Effect of the divine Will : The Ideas of this Difference in the divine Mind, are not previous to this Difference, are not the Cause of this Difference ; but God perceives them to be different, because they necessarily, and in their own Nature are so, and no more depend on his Will, than his Existence does.*

*But he goes on, and adds, <sup>a</sup> I wonder what natural Relations of Persons and Things can be in any Man's Thoughts, that the Will of God does not make to be what they are. And I wonder, indeed, how he*

came to imagine that they were in any Man's Thoughts. His Wonder arises wholly from a Mistake of the State of the Question, not considering that all <sup>d</sup> *actual Existences* are allowed to be of God; tho' the *abstract Natures* of Things are necessary and independent. I know of no watchful, no sensible, no christian Writer at all, who has ever spoke as if he had entertained such a Thought, as is here suggested by this Writer; but it is the agreed Sense of all, that all the natural Relations of Persons and Things in the World, are what they are by the Will of God; and it was expressly asserted so in the Preface and Sermon.

He says, \* *It is asserted in Opposition to this, that Righteousness becomes the Subject of the divine Will and Pleasure, because of that eternal and unalterable Fitness which he perceives in it.* This I still assert, and I think consistently with Truth and Decency; though I will not undertake to assert every Paraphrase which this Writer shall make of it, since I think I have shewn how frequently and widely, though I am apt to believe, not wilfully, he mistakes the State of the Question he writes on, and the Sense of the Sermon and Preface he writes against.

<sup>d</sup> Si concedatur illa, quæ juris naturæ, locum habitura dato non esse Deum, ac non curari ab eo negotia humana, non tamen id de *existentia* illorum est intelligendum, quæ citra dependentiam ab illo nulla; sed de *essentia in præfessione*, ut res possibilis hujus vel illius natura ita dicitur non quia Deus voluit esse possibilem, sed quia ex se non implicat contradictionem ut esse possit. *Oslund. in Gros. de Jure, &c. pag. 60.*

\* *Rem. pag. 45.*



## 36 The Foundation of Moral Virtue

### S E C T. III.

SOME Things having been said in the Sermon and Preface, concerning the Immutability of the divine Will, which are objected to; it will be necessary that I should here a little re-consider them.

The Principle I have laid down there, is this: That if we resolve the Foundation of moral Virtue into *arbitrary Will*, or *sole Pleasure*, as many do, we can never be satisfied concerning the Immutability of the divine Will: And that if we resolve it into God's *moral Perfections*, and suppose him *just*, and *good*, and *true*, by the same *absolute Necessity of Nature*, by which he *exists*, we take away that *Liberty* and *Choice* from God, which is necessary to the Notion of *moral Agency*, and *moral Perfection*, and suppose those Perfections in him, while we take away the only Medium by which it is possible to prove them. But that if we suppose moral Good and Evil to be eternally, necessarily, and unchangeably different in Nature, and the Will of God to be always guided by the infinite and unerring Knowledge and Perception which he has of them, as the moral Object of his Understanding, we shall secure the Necessity of God's moral Perfection, and reconcile the Immutability of the divine Will, with the Freedom and Liberty of it.

Upon this Principle I there said, "If all Things are to be resolved into the Will of God, as the original

*How moral  
Virtue is an  
Fruit of  
more arbitrary  
Will of God  
than of  
Immutability  
of divine Will  
How it is not  
laid down  
moral Perfection  
- say of God is  
plain from Liberty  
& choice of God  
existing within  
a moral agent.*

Source of their different Natures, then they may be changed at pleasure; which subverts the Certainty of moral Science, and saps the Foundation of all Religion. And, in answer to this, we have a long Remark, which proceeds wholly, as I think, from a careless and hasty confounding the abstract Natures of Things with their real Existences. All that he urges against this Assertion, goes upon the Supposition that I had denied, or doubted that the Will of God was the Cause of their real Existences; whereas, I have been so far from giving any room for such a Supposition, that I have constantly and carefully asserted that they are produced by him, and are the Effects of his Will: And yet, according to the Remarker, *here is an If, or Doubt, whether all Things are to be resolved into the Will of God, as the original Source of their different Natures. A Doubt very strange to me, as it is here expressed: For it is clear, beyond all If's, or questioning the Matter at all, that the First Cause of all Things, is the original Source of their different Natures throughout the Universe of Beings. Those Words of mine contain no manner of Doubt at all, as this Writer asserts, but are a bare Supposition of the Opinion I opposed, viz. that meer Will was the Foundation of Moral Virtue; from which I was drawing a Consequence, which I thought would evidently show it to be absurd: For, if by Nature of Things, I am understood, as I there mean, the abstract Nature and essential Difference of Moral Good and Evil, I cannot possibly make any Doubt about it, nor be supposed to do so, since it is what I have asserted, and endeavoured to prove, that the Will of God is not, cannot be the Cause of them, but that they*

*It is a Difference of his will of God that they are produced by him, and are the Effects of his Will: And yet, according to the Remarker, here is an If, or Doubt, whether all Things are to be resolved into the Will of God, as the original Source of their different Natures. A Doubt very strange to me, as it is here expressed: For it is clear, beyond all If's, or questioning the Matter at all, that the First Cause of all Things, is the original Source of their different Natures throughout the Universe of Beings. Those Words of mine contain no manner of Doubt at all, as this Writer asserts, but are a bare Supposition of the Opinion I opposed, viz. that meer Will was the Foundation of Moral Virtue; from which I was drawing a Consequence, which I thought would evidently show it to be absurd: For, if by Nature of Things, I am understood, as I there mean, the abstract Nature and essential Difference of Moral Good and Evil, I cannot possibly make any Doubt about it, nor be supposed to do so, since it is what I have asserted, and endeavoured to prove, that the Will of God is not, cannot be the Cause of them, but that they*

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are in Nature necessarily, eternally, and unchangeably, what they are. If I am there understood contrary to my meaning, contrary to the Course of my Argument, and contrary to the Sense of the whole Sermon and Preface, to mean the *real Natures* and *Existences* of *Things*, throughout the Universe of Beings, I cannot possibly make any more Doubt in this Case than in the other, since with me it is as certain that the Will of God is the Cause of the different Natures of Things, in this Sense, as that it is not in the other. I had clearly denied the Will of God to be the Cause of the moral Difference of Things, abstractly consider'd, and had fully asserted it to be the Cause of all real Natures and Existences throughout the Universe of Beings; and therefore I had given no ground for such a Representation as is here given of me to the Reader.

And that my Sense, in the above-mentioned Words, was mistaken, appears from what is added in the next Paragraph: *Well, but at this rate, saith the Objector, the Nature of Things may be changed at pleasure, doubtless they may at the pleasure of him who worketh all Things (not according to meer Will, but) according to the Counsel of his Will.* So that I was not understood to refer to the abstract Nature of moral Good and Evil; for by the Remarks it does not seem likely that the Author of them will say that they are changeable at pleasure.

In the following Part of the Remark the Will of God is represented as necessarily determined by a *Counsel*, of his moral Perfections, in order to



avoid the Consequence of its Mutability. But this Consequence was never charged on that State of the Question, but has one equally absurd flowing from it; and that is, destroying the divine Agency and Liberty, and introducing an absolute Fatality.

It is never said, that the Mutability of the divine Will follows from the State of the Question, which makes the Nature or moral Perfections of God necessarily determine his Will, but only from the State of it wherein Will stands for arbitrary and sole Pleasure. Nor is it ever said that the Doctrine of Fate and Necessity will follow from, and the divine Agency and Liberty be destroyed by, this latter State of the Question. But here it was necessary grossly to misrepresent me, in order to seem to have something to say in Opposition, or Confutation. And therefore when he had quoted my Words, where I am arguing against that State of the Question, which makes arbitrary Will the Foundation of Morality, he gives the Reader this Interpretation of them: *That is to say, that if the Will of God be governed only by his own Perfections, it may be mutable.* Whereas the Sense is no other than this: If the Will of God be governed by nothing, but signifies arbitrary and sole Pleasure, it may be mutable. He has the Discernment to call the Sentence he quotes a *confus'd* and *perplex'd* one, as containing the Sense he has given of it: Which argues great want of Judgment in him; for supposing that to be the Sense, it contains one of the clearest and most manifest Absurdities imaginable.

*If I differ  
from him, it is for  
the sake of God's  
divine Will, not  
mine. By his Will  
I am opposed to  
will destroy of di-  
vine agency & li-  
berty, & bring in  
an absolute fa-  
tality.*

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From what has been said, the Reader will easily judge of the Sense of this Writer's Assertion, that *the Will of God is ever the same, according to the continued Truth and Nature of Things.* For, if by *continued Truth, and Nature of Things*, is meant the *abstract Nature* of moral Good and Evil, and that his Will is regulated, and remains the same according to that, he falls in with the Opinion he opposes; but if by it is meant only the *real Natures and Existences in the Universe of Beings*, this is only to say, that in fact the Will of God has hitherto continued the same, as appears from this Uniformity in the Effects of it. But no permanent Ground, or Reason of Immutability, arises out of this, or any Proof of its Unchangeableness for the future. It appears therefore, from hence, that what this Writer calls a *very great Mistake*, is a *very great Truth*; that all that can be proved from his Words, is, that the Will of God *has not yet changed*; but that it *will not*, or *cannot ever change*, is left at absolute Uncertainty.

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### *Of the obligation of moral Virtue* S E C T. IV.

HAVING hitherto consider'd the *Foundation* of Moral Virtue, I shall now proceed to another main Branch of this Controversy, and consider the *Obligation* it *infers* upon moral Agents.

On this Head the Writer before us thus expresses himself: "Upon this all Government is founded, every reasonable Creature being obliged by its Maker to act according to the Nature he hath given it, and the Relations in which it is placed, and the Ends for which it is designed. But how is it obliged? Every Man must, if he will answer according to Fact and Experience, say that he is obliged, upon a View of Happiness, or upon Pain of some external Punishment, or internal Uneasiness and Misery, which it is the Will of the Creator should differently stand connected with an acting agreeably, or contrary to the Natures, Relations, and Ends, aforesaid. Here it is that what we call moral Obligation, in the strict and proper Sense, doth lie. In another Place he has these Words: "All Obligation that God comes under to his Creatures, is perfectly voluntary, and cannot be induced, or increased by any Thing without him, and independent on his Will. In another Place he expresses himself thus: "This is a Point that Mr. M. does not appear to have understood, nor in any one Place to have been sufficiently apprized of, That whether Reason or Revelation be spoken of, both owe their Obligation to the Will of God.

But notwithstanding what is offer'd in these, or other Parts of the Remarks, for my Instruction or Conviction, I still apprehend that there are two Sorts, or different Kinds, of Obligation. The one arises from the Knowledge or Perception we have of the different Natures of Good and

Obligation  
arises from  
Obligation  
arises from  
of the

<sup>a</sup> Rem. Page 10.  
<sup>b</sup> Page 48.  
<sup>c</sup> Page 60.

E

Evil



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*As a Obligation  
arises from an  
prospect of Happi-  
ness or misery.*

Evil, and the moral Capacity we have of directing and governing our Actions by them. The other arises from the Views we have of the Happiness or Misery, which are, by the Will of God, necessarily connected with the different Courses of Action which we choose. The former Obligation agrees to all rational Agents, tho' free from every Degree of Sensibility. The latter takes place upon the Supposition only of their being sensible, as well as rational Agents. This latter cannot take place with God, because he is a Being absolutely independent, and subject to the Power or Will of no Superior. But, in the former Sense, Obligation is applicable even to God himself; and in a higher Sense than to any other Beings, inasmuch as his moral Capacity is infinitely more perfect than theirs.

*Which of these  
two obliging  
as more proper  
to God & man.*

*From where the  
real obligation  
arises. It is more  
properly one of the  
nature of the  
- not God & evil  
of capacity is a  
kind of government  
or action by them.  
They are of a Virtue  
we have of Happiness  
or misery, we are by  
the will of God, the  
causing us to choose connected.*

It may probably be objected, that this former Kind cannot, with any Propriety, be stiled Obligation, since Obligation is commonly understood to stand for such a Necessity, or Inducement to Action, as arises from a Prospect of obtaining Happiness, or avoiding Misery. But this is owing entirely to our confining our Thoughts to such moral Agents, as have a Mixture of Sensibility in their Nature and Frame: Whereas moral Obligation arises as well, and indeed more properly, out of the Nature of moral Good and Evil, and the Capacity we have of them, than out of the Views of Happiness and Misery, with which they are so closely connected. For as all that is meant by Obligation, in one Case, is this, that Happiness is closely connected with Virtue, and Misery with Vice, and there is no possible way to come at the former, or to escape the latter, but by a Choice of Virtue; this Obligation only signifies the

the Power or Influence that the Ideas of Happiness, and Misery, have upon the Minds of sensible Agents. Why therefore, in the other Case, may not the Power and Influence, which the Ideas of moral Good and Evil have upon the Minds of such Agents as are purely rational, be allowed to be an Obligation as well as the former; and an Obligation on God, as well as the other is on Man; especially considering that there is an infinitely greater, more constant and regular Regard had to these, in the divine Mind, than Men can possibly pay to the Views and Prospects of Happiness and Misery, even as much as the infinite Capacity of the divine Mind is superior to that of his finite Creatures?

There may one Reason be assigned, why many may be shy of ascribing Obligation to God; that is, because, in considering our Obligation, as sensible Beings, arising out of our Views of Happiness and Misery, which are closely connected with Virtue and Vice, by the first Cause and Author of all Things, we connect with it in our Minds the Idea of a Superior, upon whom, as having the Power of dispensing them, we have our Dependence. And as this cannot possibly be affirmed of God, therefore it is thought absurd to apply any Obligation to him at all: Whereas, it only follows, that it is absurd to apply Obligation to him in that particular Sense of it. But it is not less absurd to deny him capable of any Obligation, since the Power and Influence, which the Ideas of moral Good and Evil have upon the Minds of rational Agents, and upon God, as such, is, with as much Propriety, styled Obligation, as that which the Ideas of Happiness and Misery have upon sensible ones.

*Obligation in  
+ sense of the  
+ properly ascribed  
to God.*

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And this Obligation is such as is applicable to God, and what he directs his Actions by, in a manner, as much more perfect than we can ours, by Happiness or Misery, as his Understanding and Will are more perfect than ours. For as Obligation, arising from our Views and Prospects of Happiness and Misery, can mean no more than that if the Rules of right Reason are disregarded, the Agent so doing, shall miss of such Happiness, and fall into such Misery, which are made the Sanctions of them; so, in the other Case, whatever Agent neglects, or breaks the Rules of Righteousness or Moral Virtue, will, by so doing, forfeit and lose his moral Character, and be ranked with vicious and disorderly Beings, since both the Ideas of moral Good and Evil, and the Prospects of Happiness and Misery, necessarily incite to Action as *moral Motives* only, and not as *physical* *Efficients*.

This is the primary, original Obligation which is applicable to every moral Agent, as such, and is totally distinct from the Obligation arising from Views of Happiness and Misery. After speaking of this in the Sermon, I said, that the *Will of God constitutes a new and additional Obligation to the Practice of Virtue*; meaning thereby the Obligation arising from Views and Prospects of Happiness and Misery, which the Will of God has closely connected with Virtue and Vice. And to this it is objected, that I evidently leave the Will of God out of the Reason of Things, as my Principles lead me to do. But this is said with like Truth and Judgment as the rest; for neither have I done

Serm. Page 27, 28.

Primary Original Obligation  
 arising from  
 Views of Happiness  
 and Misery  
 is distinct from  
 the Obligation  
 arising from  
 the Will of God  
 which is connected  
 with Virtue and Vice

Will of God  
 this

connected with Virtue & Vice



this, nor do my Principles lead me to do it. For the Will of God may be consider'd in a twofold Light, either as merely commanding the Practice of Virtue, or as annexing Happiness to it. It is this last, the Exercise of his Power and Authority, in fortifying his Command, with the prevailing Prospect of Happiness and Reward, which constitutes the new and additional Obligation spoken of. Consider the Will of God, in the former Light, as merely commanding it, and it is obligatory upon all inferior moral Agents to obey it, in the primary Sense of Obligation; not indeed *barely*, as it is the *Will* of God, but as his Will is always conformed to the infinite and all perfect Understanding which he has of Good and Evil.

*Will of  
God is not  
the same.  
The Will of  
God is  
not the same  
as the Will  
of man.  
vid. infra  
pag. 51.*

This is not to leave, nor do my Principles at all necessitate me to leave the Will of God out of the Reason of Things; for with me the Will of such a Being, whose moral Capacity, and whose moral Character, reflect such excellent and infinite Glory on him throughout the Universe, will ever be esteemed the most justifiable Ground, and Reason of Action, to all inferior moral Agents. And this I had asserted, in as plain Words as I could possibly express it, both in the Sermon and Preface. *But this is a Point that this Writer does not appear to have understood, nor in any one Place to have been sufficiently apprized of; namely, that the Power and Influence which the Ideas of moral Good and Evil have upon the Minds of rational Agents, and upon God, as such, is with as much Propriety stiled Obligation, as the Power and Influence which the Ideas of Happiness and Misery have upon the Minds of sensible Agents.*

There

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There is one Thing farther added in this same Place, and therefore I take notice of it here; which, as it could scarce have dropped from any candid and ingenuous Writer, so it will hardly escape the Notice of every intelligent and discerning Reader: And that is, the Opposition stated by this Writer, between such as place the Foundation of Virtue in the Nature of Things, and himself. *I shall leave him to do all the Good he can with his Nature and Reason of Things, previous to the Will of God; and I shall endeavour to do all the Service I can, by constantly declaring and shewing, that of God, and through him, and to him, are all Things, whether natural or moral: To him be Glory for ever, Amen.* As if there was a real Opposition; and such who establish the Foundation of Moral Virtue differently from him, do not as firmly believe, and are not as ready to declare this, as he is. But this is a Method which this Writer frequently falls into, of assuming an Air of Opposition to his Adversary, whilst he is asserting Things which are as firmly believed, and as freely owned by him, and as consistently too, as by himself. Whether this be a moral or intellectual Failure, I will not decide, but leave it to the Reader to judge.

We are referred, for his Sense of Obligation, to the *Civilians*, who writing concerning the Nature and Foundation of Laws, derive all Obligation from the Rewards and Punishments with which they are enforced. But there is a great deal of difference between the Foundation of Laws, and the Foundation of Moral Virtue;

<sup>f</sup> Rem. pag. 61.

and

and he can never write to any good Purpose, till he <sup>Foundation</sup> makes this Distinction. Civilians define Laws to be <sup>(as it is)</sup> the Will of a Superior, and derive all Obligation <sup>moral virtue</sup> from the Sanctions of Rewards and Punishments <sup>very different</sup> annexed to them: No wonder, therefore, if they make the Foundation of Virtue to be the Will of God, for it is the sole Foundation of it, considered in that Light. Nor is at all to be wonder'd at, if they deny God to be capable of 'Obligation; for it is impossible that he should, taking it in their Sense of it. But there are others, who tho' they own the Truth of these Assertions in the Mouths of the Civilians, and admit of such Language, when the Question or Enquiry is concerning Laws; yet by Moral Virtue, or that which arises from Reason and Fitness of Things, mean somewhat quite different from Laws, of a higher Origin, and more extensive Nature; and by Obligation something quite different from the Motives to Action, arising from Views of Happiness and Misery. According to which God may be conceived capable of Moral Virtue, and of moral Obligation. Hence it is that some, and one at least of the

<sup>f</sup> Car tout droit et toute Loi renformant quelque Obligation, et l'Obligation supposant toujours un principe exterieur, & superieur, je ne vois pas Comment on peut, sans absurdité assu jettir Dieu a aucune pareille chose. *Puff. Droit de la Nature*, liv. 2. c. 3. § 6. See also *Barbeyrac's* Note upon *liv. 1. c. 2. § 4. des devoirs de l'Homme*, &c.

<sup>g</sup> Et hæc quidem, que jam diximus, locum aliquem haberent, etiamsi daremus quod sine summo scelere dari nequit, non esse Deum, aut non curari ab eo negotia humana. *Grot. Proleg. § 11.*

<sup>h</sup> Similia habet Thomas, in *1ma*, 2da, qu. 71. Art. 6. Tametsi Deus non esset, nec mendacium lege prohibuisset, fore tamen mendacium peccatum, &c. *Caspar Ziegler in Grot. pag. 7.* See also *Jugement d'un Anonyme. pag. 465.*

most



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most judicious and accurate among the *Civilians* themselves, if *Grotius* deserves that Character, have spoken of Obligation and Sin, even should there be neither God nor Providence.

This Writer may, perhaps, find some hard Words for this; but the Reader will judge whether it be the Part of a fair Writer, in him to charge his Antagonist, so frequently as he does, with speaking so *wrong*, so *indecently*, so *erroneously*, concerning the Attributes of God; and whether he does not mistake his Province, which is to *prove*, and not *assert* this. Whereas, this is to act the Part of an Arbitrator; it is begging the Question, it is dogmatizing, and not disputing: And, unless he is able to prove his Point, which such a Conduct is no very shrewd Symptom of, those Charges will all recur upon himself, and he must acquiesce under his own Accusation. What is it to the Merits of the Cause, that such and such Things are shocking and frightful to this Writer? Nothing is ordinarily more shocking and frightful to a Man engaged in Controversy, than when the Truth appears on his Adversary's side. And I believe this Writer is not the first to whom *necessary* and *important* Truths have appeared *frightful* and *shocking* Sayings, and by whom the crying out against them, as such, has been the main Argument used to prove them such. But tho' there may be some, who will take alarm at such Words, I assure this Writer it gives me no farther Concern, than, as I apprehend, the Cause of Truth, and the Freedom of Enquiry, may possibly in some measure be hurt, and hindred by it.

How

How easy would it be for me to imitate the Professions which this Writer makes of charitably supposing, that he does not surely conceal so highly of himself, as to make his own particular way of Thinking, the Foundation of Truth to every body else; and that all Expressions which do not square therewith, are, for that reason, indecent, erroneous, frightful, and shocking, and what not? But that I think there is no great Charity in such a Supposition, and that it would not be to speak with a Degree of Seriousness becoming such a sacred and glorious Subject.

I had, in the Preface, taken notice of an Assertion which I thought very exceptionable, viz. *'The distinguishing between the Reason of Things and the Will of God, hath rather served the Purposes of Vice, and strengthened the Corruptions of many, than produced any real Reformation.* And upon this I am charged with *'leaving out the very Subject on which the whole Paragraph is written, and supplying it with another Subject, and then making what is predicated of it, to stand as if there was no such Alteration.* And the Reader is told, that my Resentment arises, and is carried on upon a Quotation of his Words, which is not true. For it seems I should have quoted it thus; *'The Essays lately published to distinguish between the Reason of Things and the Will of God, &c.* intimating, that the Mischief complained of, was owing to the Essays lately published, and not to their distinguishing between the Reason of Things and the Will of God, as I had put it. But I can't see how I have mistook or misrepresented this Passage, in citing

<sup>d</sup> Preface to Sermon, p. 6.

<sup>e</sup> Rem. pag. 26.

<sup>f</sup> pag. 27.

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of it. For in the Remarker's own Opinion, \* the Malignity and mischievous Tendency of these Essays, arose from their distinguishing the Reason of Things, and the Will of God ; and where is the mighty Difference, whether we say, Essays that do distinguish these Things, or distinguishing them does this great Mischief?

This Writer, after quoting another Paragraph of his, which I at first took, and he now declares was intended to be explanatory of the former ; viz. *Whatever Accuracy any Writer may show in abstracted Reasonings, about these Points, yet I presume it will ever be found hurtful to the Cause of Virtue to teach Men to separate them ;* goes on and adds, *Now Mr. M— declares he is not for separating them, and therefore he might have looked upon himself to be wholly unconcerned in what I had said.* I answer no, I could not ; because he makes no difference between *distinguishing* and *separating* them, but makes the latter explanatory of the former. And as I professedly did *distinguish* them, but did not, could not, nor ever will *separate* them, I was not willing that *distinguishing* and *separating* them should pass with the Reader for one and the same thing ; and therefore I took such particular Care to show the Reader the different Senses of them.

And when I have declar'd for distinguishing, and against separating them, my Design must be separating, whether I will no. For thus he goes on. <sup>b</sup> *But his Sermon actually doing that which his Preface declares against, he thought it necessary to shew his Displeasure at the whole Paragraph.* In the Pre-

\* Rem. page 30.

<sup>b</sup> pag. 27.



face, I say; I grant indeed, it may be hurtful to the Cause and Interest of Virtue, to teach Men to separate them, so as to pay and confine their Regards to one of them alone, so as to set up one of them in Opposition to the other, or lay either of them entirely aside. But where has the Sermon actually taught us to pay and confine our Regards to one of them alone? Where has it taught us to set up one of them in Opposition to the other? Or where to lay either of them aside? This is the Separation, and that alone which the Preface speaks of, and declares against. This is that which is falsely charged upon me, and I believe it will be found as difficult to name the Place in the Sermon, where this is done, as to prove that it was made in the fanciful manner, hinted by the Remarker. It is easy to assert both the one and the other, but neither the one nor the other of these Assertions can be easily made good.

It is said indeed, *For to make the Reason and Fitness of Things a Foundation and Rule of moral Virtue, previous to the Will of God, is to separate it from any Regard at all to the Will of God, as a Foundation and Rule of Virtue.* But is this so to separate it, as was declared against in the Preface? i. e. to pay and confine our Regards to one of them alone, to set one of them up, in Opposition to the other, and lay either of them entirely aside? This was asserted, and this was to be proved. Whereas I have already asserted, and now do afresh assert, that the moral Character and Actions of God, or the Will of God, is an infinitely perfect Rule of moral Virtue, to every inferior moral Agent; and that there cannot possibly be any

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surer Rule or Measure to conduct our own by, than the divine Will, when we have attained the Knowledge of it; that it is as sure as the very Nature and Reason of Things, because it is ever regulated thereby; and that they who do *actually disregard the Will of God*, in the Practice of Virtue, though they ever so carefully practise it, from the abstract Reasonableness and Fitness of Things, break *the Obligation* which all inferior moral Agents are under to it. That is imperfect and incomplete Virtue, which is performed by Men, or any inferior moral Agent whatever, *actually separate* from all Regards to the Authority and Command of God, since it is as eternally fit that the Will of God should be always exactly regarded as the Rule of our Conduct, as that the Reason of Things should, because his Will is always conformed to the Reason of Things, and will help us more certainly and easily to discover it. The *Foundation* and *Rule* of Virtue, I don't apprehend to be synonymous Terms. There seems to be a *wide Difference*, a Difference which is professedly made throughout the Sermon and Preface; where the Will of God, though *denied* to be the *Foundation*, is *allowed* to be a *Rule* of Virtue to all inferior moral Agents: For though to make the Nature and Reason of Things a *Foundation* and *Rule* of moral Virtue, is to *distinguish* it in our Ideas and Thoughts from the Will of God, as the *Foundation* of Virtue, yet it is not to *separate* it in our Practice, from any Regard at all to the Will of God, as a *Rule* of Virtue.

Notwithstanding, therefore, what has been offered against this passage, I do not see but that it still contains a *great Truth*: viz. That the abstract Nature of Righteousness, or moral Virtue,

The Foundation &  
Rule of Virtue  
widely different.  
The Will of God  
a Rule but not  
a Foundation of  
Virtue.

is what it is not by an Act of the divine Will, but naturally, necessarily, and eternally independent of it.

This Passage will not prove, that Mr. M— hath used as separating Terms in his Sermon, as any Writer, who hath set this Principle against revealed Religion, would desire. For, there have been celebrated Writers, who have actually separated the Reason of Things from the Will of God, in the very Sense in which I have utterly disclaimed it: viz. So as to pay and confine their Regards to the former alone, so as to set it up in Opposition to the other, and lay the latter entirely aside. Mr. Boyle argues not only from Reason, but from the Testimony also of orthodox Divines, that Atheists may be capable of the Ideas of moral Good and Evil, and has laboured to prove, that such may believe that they are obliged to conform themselves to the Ideas of right Reason, as a Rule of moral Good, distinguished from natural Good. He produces many Persons as Examples of the Truth of this, who have so separated the Reason of Things from the Will of God, as I have utterly disclaimed, and am so far from actually doing it, that I tremble at the very Thoughts of it.

The

\* Mr. Boyle's Sentiments will be easily seen in the following Words. Puis que M. Despreaux nous apprend, que l'Atheisme a fait des progrès, parmi même des personnes de l'autre sexe, nous pouvons bien supposer, que Flavie & Pulcherie deux grandes Dames de la cour sont devenues Athees celle la par le chemin de l'étude, celle-ci par le chemin de la volupté. Supposons que l'Atheisme de l'une soit connue de l'autre, & que la première étant avertie qu'il meurt de faim une infinité de gens ne fasse servir sur sa table que du bœuf & du mouton afin d'employer au soutien des pauvres, l'argent qu'elle épargne en renonçant à la bonne chère. Supposons que l'on rapporte  
à Pul-



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The Remarker speaking of the Opinion he opposes, says, *"It is not of God to break Men's Attention to his Will, by setting up the Reason of Things separately after they have come to the Knowledge of him. But surely, it is not to break Men's Attention to his Will, to tell them it ought always to be regarded by them, as the all-perfect Rule of moral Virtue, and of Men's moral Conduct. And to shew them the very Reason why it ought, because it is always and immutably conformed to right Reason and Virtue. Is it to set up the Reason of Things separately from his Will, to tell Men they ought never to be separated, but only distinguished? This way of charging one's Antagonist, I am sure, is not of God; and this way of answering him, tho' it be what this Writer chuses to fall in with, is, nevertheless, dangerous; and rather hurtful than serviceable to the Cause of Virtue."*

In this Remark there is one particularly unkind and unjust Charge. *"I must desire him to reconsider*

a Pulchérie cette charité de Flavie, & qu'on lui demande ce qu'elle en juge. Je suis persuadé qu'elle repondra, *cette action est telle, je voudrois l'avoir faite, je l'admierois beaucoup moins dans Artenice qui est fermement persuadé qu'elle peut éviter l'enfer, & mériter le Paradis en donnant l'Aumône, mais que Flavie qui ne croit point de divinité se soit privée des plaisirs du goût afin de sauver la vie a plusieurs pauvres, c'est un heroïsme incomparable, Je lui envie cette perfection.* C'est là Monsieur une chose que je trouve tres vraisemblable. Il me paroît sur ordinairement parlant que les mondains aiment mieux ne rien retrancher du superflu de leur table que de le faire servir a sauver la vie a plusieurs familles; mais je ne puis gueres comprendre que s'ils veulent recueillir pour examiner la conduite de Flavie, ils ne la trouvent tres conforme a la raison & aux devoirs de l'humanité, toute consideration de l'enfer & du Paradis mise a part. *Oeuvres diverses.* Tom. III. p. 407.

*Rem. pag. 28.*

pag. 31.

Things,

Things, before he resolve to persist in this Determination; viz. That it would be a Case exactly parallel not to preach Christ, or not to preach up the Distinction between the Reason of Things, and the Will of God, in that manner that he hath placed them. A little lower, Mr. M's Assertion is this, That we might as well forbear to preach Christianity, as to forbear preaching up the Reason and Nature of Things independent on the Will of God. This is the grand Error, upon which his opposition to me is founded, and which manifestly gives the Advantage to the Writers against Christianity. It had been offer'd as a Dissuasive from Mens distinguishing the Reason of Things from the Will of God, that it had rather served the Purposes of Vice, and strengthened Men's Corruption, than produced any real Reformation. I understood this to be spoken of as a Fact, and so 'tis own'd. I replied, That this was no Fault of the Principle it self, did not necessarily flow from it, but was an abuse of it; and therefore was unfit to be mentioned as any Proof of the Falshood of this Principle. For if this Abuse were allowed to prove the Principle false, or would justify the laying it aside, the same Abuse having been made of Christianity, would be an Argument of the same Force, to prove the Falshood of that, and justify the laying of that aside also. But that, as this Abuse in the latter Case was not, nor could be in any Case a just Reason to condemn any Principle, or justify the Disuse or Disowning of it, this Writer's Observation, though allowed to be true, was nothing to the Purpose; not proving any thing to the Detriment or Disparagement of the Principle it was brought against, more than it would to the Detriment or Disparagement of Christianity it self. In this Respect, and in this only, did I say the Case was parallel, I did say and mean that

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that we must write or preach nothing, if nothing but what is incapable of being abused, no not Christianity it self; but I never said or thought that the preaching of this (though a great and important Truth) was equally necessary with preaching the distinguishing Doctrines of Christianity. Candid Reader, whoever thou art, who hast not the Persons of Men in Admiration, but the Honour of God, and the Cause and Interest of Truth and Virtue nearest thy Heart, judge between us. Is this Tenderness? Is this Charity? Is this Justice? Or what is it?

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### SECT. V.

**H**ITHERTO I have consider'd the Foundation of Moral Virtue, so far as Reason alone is concerned, in the Inquiry. I shall now inquire into the Sense of those several Places of Scripture, which have been made use of by us, on one or other side of the Question. But I beg the Reader to indulge me a Word or two on this Writer's first Remark, which is filled with many injurious Insinuations and Reflexions.

If it was not for my own just and necessary Vindication, I should have pass'd them by, without saying any thing in reply. But whereas he has in this and other Places of his Remarks, pretended to describe the Method, Circumstances, and Views, with which the Sermon was composed, I assure the Reader it is all Fiction, Falshood, and meer Romance; and that could I think it worthy his Attention or Knowledge, I could give him



him a Relation of that Fact, which should be in every Circumstance the Reverse of what this Writer has published to the World, and yet in every Circumstance the strictest Truth. He represents me as *laying a Set of Notions together, not taken from the Scripture it self, but fixed in my Mind, by reading other Books, and then seeking for a Text to place at the Head of them, and then labouring the Words of Scripture to mold them agreeably thereto.* What is it, I wonder, that gives this Man a Right, or what could be his Inducement to intrude, after this manner, upon the private Studies, and pretend to dive into the retired Thoughts of other Persons, and publish and proclaim their Methods of Thinking, and Motives of Action, as if he knew their Hearts. Did the Merits of the Cause lead to, or require this? Did Charity guide his Pen here? Or can there be any justifiable Reason given to such a Conduct as this? I leave it to the Reader to decide what *Decency* or *Charity* there is, in what he hath said on this Head, but I assure him, that there is not the least Syllable of Truth in it.

I find it is pretended, that there is a great Difference between *what might be insisted on as a Foundation of Morality in the Schools, and might, for the Proof and Exercise of Reason, be debated in a scientific Way, and what is the Foundation of Righteousness, which Revelation proposeth to every Man, as it refers every Thing to the Will of God.* And again: *However, a philosophical or moral Essay, may represent the Foundation of Moral Virtue, yet for*

<sup>s</sup> Rem. Page 33, 36.

<sup>h</sup> Ibid.

<sup>i</sup> Page 35:

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*a Preacher of the Word or Will of God, and of the Gospel of Christ, to explain the Scripture Notion of Righteousness, and the Foundation of it there, any other way than this above-mentioned, seems to me quite out of Place of Character. But I own I am at a loss to know upon what Reason this Observation is founded. For either that which may be insisted on in the Schools, and represented in moral and philosophical Essays, as the Foundation of Virtue, is the true Foundation of Virtue, or it is not. If it be the true one, I can see no Reason why it may not be represented as such in the Churches, and by the Preachers of the Word and Will of God, in their Sermons and Discourses to christian People. And if it be not, there is, I think, as little Reason why it should be insisted on in the Schools, and be represented and published to the World, as such, in moral and philosophical Essays. That which is the true Foundation of Moral Virtue, ought not to be banished out of the Churches, unless we must feed their Ignorance, in order to nourish their Devotion, and that which is not the true one, ought not to be insisted on in the Schools, or any where else, as such, or published to the World in any Essays whatever. But as there is one, and but one true Foundation of Moral Virtue, it is that, and that alone, which merits our Regard as such, both in the Schools and Churches, to the Exclusion of every other which is pretended to be such. If this Writer can disprove that to be the Foundation of moral Virtue, which I have represented as such, and can by Reason and Argument fairly overthrow the Principles, upon which my Reasoning is built, he will then more than assert, he will then prove it unworthy the Attention of the faithful Followers of Jesus Christ. But in the mean time,*

to cast out such Reflexions about christian Assemblies, and Preachers, and Sermons, as this Writer does, who has said so little of Reason and Argument on that Head, is, in my Judgment, to plead and argue *ad populum*, and to betake himself to a Refuge unbecoming a Man of true Probity and Honour, and undeserving of any Answer or Reply.

In the second Remark he proceeds to animadvert on the Text from which the Sermon was preached; and says, that *he could not have wished for a better Text to support his Principle, and to expose mine, than those Words of the Psalmist, The righteous Lord loveth Righteousness, his Countenance doth behold the Upright. Here is a plain referring*, says he, *to the Nature and Perfection of God, the righteous Lord; and to the Choice, the Will and Delight of God, he loveth Righteousness; and to the Obligation, which bindeth and enforceth what is true and right.* I was apprehensive, on the contrary, and still cannot help thinking, that the Psalmist here speaks of these three Things; first, of Righteousness, as necessarily and in its own Nature different from moral Evil, and as such the moral Object of the divine Understanding and Will, Perception and Choice. Secondly, of the infinite and immutable Rectitude of the divine Will, as freely chusing it for the Rule of his own Actions. Thirdly, that of Consequence, as the glorious Author and first Cause of all Things cannot be ignorant of that Righteousness and Virtue which is actually to be found amongst Men, he will necessarily approve, and graciously reward it, according to the different Degrees in which they practise it. The Remarker speaks not a Word of the first of those three, and therefore



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would insinuate, I suppose, that the Text does not; tho' this is the only material Point in which our Accounts of it differ. Does not the Text plainly speak of the *Object* of the divine Choice, Will, and Delight, as well as of the *Choice*, *Will*, and *Delight* it self? Does it say only, that the Lord *chooseth*, *willeth*, and *delighteth*, and not tell us *in what*? Does it only say he *loveth*, and does it not say that he loveth *Righteousness*? This is what this Writer, when he would seem to give a complete Account of the Text, makes no mention of, but ranks the part of the Text, *loveth Righteousness*, under the single Head of the *Choice*, *Will*, and *Delight* of God; whereas it evidently includes *the Choice of God, and the Object chosen*.

And I, accordingly, gave the Sense of the Words in the following Paraphrase. " Since  
 " God suffers the Righteous to endure such hard  
 " and severe Trials, and permits the Wicked,  
 " who persecute and insult them, to enjoy a quiet  
 " and undisturbed Prosperity, I make no doubt  
 " but he will fully recompence and make all  
 " Things up to the Virtuous and Upright; and  
 " upon the Wicked rain Snares, Fire and Brim-  
 " stone, and an horrible Tempest. This must  
 " be the Portion of their Cup, since it is na-  
 " turally fit that Men of such different Cha-  
 " racters should be differently dealt with. And  
 " as it is the Province of God, who is a righteous  
 " Being, to separate and sort Men, and allot  
 " to every one their respective Portions, it can-  
 " not be doubted, but that Righteousness and  
 " Wickedness will be the sole Rule and Measure  
 " of his Proceeding; and that he will deal with  
 " them, as they are found differently to have  
 " deserved on this Score." Notwithstanding the  
 heavy

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heavy Charges of Novelty and Peculiarities, I don't see but this is still a just Paraphrase of the Text.

But it seems this is <sup>a</sup> putting my own Sense upon David, with an Assurance that is really surprizing. I would willingly express my self inoffensively, and I wish the Remarker had set me a Pattern of a more modest and unexceptionable Phraseology. But I can't say, that I think it much more arrogant and assuming, to say *this is David's Sense*, or *thus David speaks*, than it is to say, <sup>b</sup> *The Place of Scripture Mr. M. has chosen, hath a Sense evidently different from the Scope of his Sermon: Or, <sup>c</sup> Men may speak of Righteousness, without thinking of the Will of God at all; but this did not the Psalmist: Or, as it is added, <sup>d</sup> Let Mr. M. do what he can, with his Reason and Nature of Things, independent on the Nature and Will of God, yet he shall never be able to prove, from this Psalm, that there is any such Foundation referr'd to by the inspired Penman. Was this the Decency and Modesty, with which it became this Writer to express himself, when he had me under the Lash, and was charitably chastising me for saying only, this was David's Sense, thus David speaks?*

In the Sermon I had occasion to cite Gen. xviii. 25. *That be far from thee, to do after this manner, to slay the Righteous with the Wicked; and that the Righteous should be as the Wicked, that be far from thee: Shall not the Judge of all the Earth do right?* And having quoted them, said, <sup>e</sup> *This plainly*

<sup>a</sup> Rem. pag. 39.

<sup>b</sup> Page 37.

<sup>c</sup> Page 38.

<sup>d</sup> Page 39.

<sup>e</sup> Rem. pag. 25.

*supposes*

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supposes that there is a Right and Wrong, a Good and Evil, in Actions independent of the Will even of God himself, otherwise Abraham's Plea would carry in it no more than this, Shall not the Judge of all the Earth do what he will? Which is plainly making it an Appeal to Sovereignty, and arbitrary Power; whereas it is meant as an Appeal to common Equity and Justice, of which God has made us capable of forming clear Ideas. And it is remarked, *Here, before he was aware, Mr. M. expressly owns our Ideas of Equity and Justice, to be from the Will of God forming us capable of them.* But, with his leave, I will tell the Reader what I asserted, because I do not much like his paraphrasing my Words; viz. that God has made us capable of forming clear Ideas of common Equity and Justice. This is my Assertion; and it appears to me so true and certain, that I am at a loss to know with what View he represents me as asserting it unawares, unless he imagines me to assert in them, that the Nature of common Justice and Equity, is from the Will of God: And if this be his meaning, the Reader will judge whether he had any reason for making this Remark, or not.

The Remarker, in the Exposition he gives of these Words, says, that *the first Stress of Abraham's Argument lies upon the Pronoun Thee; it be far from Thee, such a Being as thou art, and endued with such Perfection, particularly such boundless Mercy and Goodness as thou art, to slay the Righteous with the Wicked.* And then again, *that be far from thee, the great Patron and Lover of Righteousness, that the Righteous should be as the Wicked, in their*

<sup>f</sup> Serm. pag. 55.

<sup>g</sup> Ibid.



*final Punishment and Destruction.* The Reader will judge whether this is not to make, and invent Scripture, rather than to comment and explain it; for what mention does the Text make of *Mercy or Goodness*? or what reference is there in *Abraham's Argument* thereto? What, the least ground is there, to talk of the *Righteous being as the Wicked, in their final Punishment and Destruction*? Could not the *Righteous* be Sharers with the *Wicked* in this *Destruction*, and yet not be finally destroyed? The Text evidently speaks of *Justice or Equity*, and that only; and *Abraham* builds his Plea and Argument upon that alone. He argues not from the Nature of *Mercy or Goodness*, but pleads with God that it was the Office of a Judge to do right; and that to destroy the Persons of the *Righteous* with the *Wicked*, would be to act contrary to it. And therefore supposing that there were fifty righteous Persons in the Place, he pleads that it may, and presumes that it will, prevent the Ruin of it, or at least their Ruin.

*Abraham*, considering the Destruction threatned to those wicked Cities, and being moved with Compassion and Concern for their Safety, argues thus with God in their Behalf: "As it is scarce  
" to be thought, that amidst so great a Number  
" of wicked Men, there should not be found at  
" least some few who retain the Sense, and live  
" in the Practice of Righteousness and Virtue;  
" and as it is in it self naturally unjust, that the  
" same should be the Treatment of the numerous  
" wicked, and the righteous few which are found  
" among them; so I cannot but judge it, on this  
" account, impossible, because it is unreasonable  
" that thou shouldst bring upon these righteous  
" Persons the same common Ruin with the rest.  
" It

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“ It being the Office of a righteous Judge to ad-  
 “ minister Judgment according to the Reason and  
 “ Right of the Case, and it being impossible  
 “ that any Ignorance should blind, any Power  
 “ hinder, or any Motive bias, and bribe thee,  
 “ knowingly and willingly to act contrary ; I  
 “ firmly believe, that as thou art the Sovereign  
 “ and supreme Judge over the whole Earth, so  
 “ thou wilt in this, as in all other Cases, sustain  
 “ the Character of a righteous and just one.”

Abraham, I think, evidently lays the Foundation of his Argument in the settled Nature of Justice and Equity ; whereas, if Justice and Equity was any thing that supreme Power pleased to make it, his Argument would be absurd, and his interposing vain. Nor will this Interpretation appear liable to the odious Imputation of *Novelty* and *Peculiarities* ; the Reader may see some <sup>b</sup> Authorities for it in the Margin.

<sup>b</sup> *Absit à te, ut facias.* Urget ab argumento justitiæ, & æquitatis & ab officio justii judicis. Alienum est, inquit, ab officio justii judicis, præsertim ejus, cujus est omnem judicare terram, ut perdat justum cum impio. Tu vero judex ille es totius terræ, quare absit à te, ut hoc facias. *Musc. in loc.*

*An qui judex est omnis terra, non facies judicium ?* Non faciat æquitatem ? Id est, nonne judex universæ terræ judicabit ? Q. D. Nonne par est & æquum, ut tu, qui judex es universæ terræ, recte judices ? Ne scilicet, Domine Deus, male audias apud impios & infideles. *Valabl. in loc.*

Videt Abraham impossibile esse, quin Deus justorum rationem habeat. Ideo orat sicut David : Ne perdas, Deus, animam meam cum impio, Ps xxvi. 9. hoc enim tyrannorum est. Hi, ut expleant iram suam, incendunt domos, pagos, oppida ; nihil solliciti justis, an injusti pereant ? A quo more Deum longissime abesse, novit Abraham ; ideo rogat eum, propter quinquaginta justos, qui forte in urbe Sodomorum reperiri possunt, velit iram suam continere. *Luther. in Com. 24.*

Under

Under this Remark we have the following Words: "I am sure, says he, the good believing Patriarch is not at all obliged to Mr. M. for placing his Sentiments and Reasoning in such a Light. But here he seems to me to depart a little from that Air of Gravity and Solemnity, which he, on all other Occasions, so much affects; and I don't know why the Remarker should chuse thus to express himself, unless it was to insinuate how much he thought he was obliged to him for placing them in such a quite different one. He adds, little did Abraham ever think of a Righteousness independent on the Will of God, whose Faith was imputed to him for Righteousness. But there is a very material Mistake, and Misrepresentation of our Dispute, contained in these Words; a Mistake that every one, but a Stranger in the Controversy, will discern. For by Righteousness here, must, I think, be meant actual Righteousness practised by Men, or what might justly be expected and exalted of them: It was for such Righteousness that Abraham's Faith was imputed to him. But this is not the Sense of Righteousness in this Enquiry: The present Question is concerning the abstract Nature of Righteousness, and the Ground or Foundation of that; and not concerning the Righteousness which is practised by Men, and the Reasons or Grounds on which they do so. The Righteousness which is practised by Men, is in part owing to the apparent Reasonableness of Virtue and right Action, and in part to the Views of Happiness and Misery, which the Will of God has set before them. These are the Grounds and Reasons upon which Men freely choose to practise Righteousness



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and Virtue. But these are distinct Things from that which is the Ground or Reason why Moral Virtue, in the abstract Nature of it, is what it is. When this Writer therefore says, *little did Abraham think of a Righteousness independent on the Will of God, whose Faith was imputed to him for Righteousness*; if he means a Righteousness actually practised among Men, I entirely agree with him, having never asserted or thought the contrary: But on this Supposition the Observation is entirely foreign to the Argument; no Christian does think, no Christian can think, of such a Righteousness independent on the Will of God. But if he means, little did Abraham think that the abstract Nature of Righteousness was eternal, necessary, and unalterable, independent on the Will of God, in that I differ from him. And on this Supposition, his Observation has neither Truth nor Sense in it.

But thus rashly and injuriously was I accused, in the very Title-Page of his Book, of insisting on a Foundation of Righteousness among Men, independent on, and previous to, the Will of God. It is this random Application of Words, according to the Sound, without carefully considering the Sense of them, and the Misrepresentations of the Principles of Knowledge, which arises out of it, that furnishes such matter of Boasting and Triumph to Infidels and Unbelievers, and that prejudices the Minds of weak Christians against the Truth, and prevents the Spread of it: Such Darknings and Disguises especially, when coming from Men of large Acquaintance and Esteem, often doing more Harm to its Cause and Interest, than the clearest Proofs and Demonstrations can do in its Favour.

I had occasion likewise to mention in the Sermon, Isa. v. 20. *Wo unto them that call Evil Good, and Good Evil; that put Bitter for Sweet, and Sweet for Bitter; Darkneſs for Light, and Light for Darkneſs: Where I ſaid, \* God himſelf, by the Mouth of his Prophet, ſtrenuouſly inveighs againſt ſuch as ſubvert theſe Foundations of Virtue, and deſtroy the natural and neceſſary Differences between Good and Evil. Upon this I am charged with quoting the Prophet juſt as I had done the Pſalmiſt, i. e. ſtrenuouſly inveighing againſt ſuch as ſubvert the Foundations of Virtue, as they ariſe from the immutable Nature of Things, independent on the immutable Nature and Will of God. Whereas I only quote theſe Words as aſſerting a Difference independent on mere Will.*

Another Text of Scripture which I mentioned in the Sermon, is Heb. vi. 17, 18. *Wherein God willing more abundantly to ſhew unto the Heirs of Promise the Immutability of his Counſel, confirmed it by an Oath: That by two immutable Things, in which it was impoſſible for God to lie, we might have a ſtrong Conſolation, who have fled for Refuge, to lay hold of the Hope ſet before us. This Writer ſays, that theſe Words put the Security of a Promise and Oath, upon its being impoſſible for God to lie: And what makes a Lie an utter Impoſſibility with God, but the Perfection of his Nature? But, I think, he entirely miſtakes the Senſe of the Words; and that his Miſtake is owing to this, that he takes the ſacred Writer to ſpeak of a \* natural or phyſical*

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\* Sermon, pag. 22.    b Rem. pag. 59.

c Such phyſical Neceſſity is inconſiſtent with Liberty, of the Power of Action; and yet the Writers on this ſide of the Queſtion,

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*sical*, when he speaks only of a *moral* Impossibility. The sacred Writer does not assert, that God having made a Promise and Oath, is under a *natural* or *physical* Necessity to make them good; and that therefore the Security of a Promise and Oath, depends upon a *natural* or *physical* Impossibility that he should fail of doing so. But he plainly asserts, that a Promise and Oath being made, to be true to them, is of immutable Goodness, and eternal Obligation; and that therefore it is *morally* impossible, that God should make a Promise and Oath, and not inviolably observe them. I shall submit the following Paraphrase of the Words to the Judgment of the Reader.

“ Wherefore God, who had resolved with himself, to give to the natural Seed of *Abraham*  
“ the

stion, generally and roundly assert the moral Attributes of God to be thus necessary, as will appear in the following Citations.

Whatsoever *Necessity* he exists by, by the same is he, wise, good, and perfect; and, consequently, it is as absurd to say he is obliged to act according to Goodness, as to exist. *Essay on Moral Obligation*, pag. 51.

So God's chusing what is Good, is not free, tho' voluntary: He cannot chuse Evil, because he is perfect; it would be Imperfection to chuse Evil; it is his natural, necessary Perfection; to be above the Capacity of chusing amiss; and so he can no more chuse Evil, than he can cease to exist. *Ibid.*

Dieu est juste par sa nature, il ne peut, ni agir, ni vouloir agir, que justement; c'est en lui une heureuse, impuissance, &c une necessité glorieuse, qui vient uniquement de sa perfection infinie. *Barbeyr. Reflex. sur le jugement d'un anonyme*, p. 459.

As to the Notion of *Freedom* in God, that cannot be injured at all, by making his *moral Perfections necessary*, in the manner before



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“ the Land of *Canaan*, for a *temporal Inheritance*,  
“ and to his *spiritual Seed* the more valuable  
“ *Inheritance of eternal Life*, being willing to  
“ give all possible Evidence that he would never  
“ alter the Resolution he had made, did, after his  
“ Promise of it, the more fully to convince them  
“ of the Certainty of the Thing, farther confirm  
“ it by the means of an Oath.

“ And by these two Things, viz. a *Promise*, and  
“ *Oath*, the performing of which is of unchange-  
“ able Goodness, and eternal Obligation, (for  
“ which Reason it is impossible, *morally* speaking,  
“ that God should violate, or fail to observe them;) )  
“ we, who have fled from the Guilt and Misery  
“ of a sinful Life, and have betook our selves,  
“ as to a Place of Refuge, to the Hope of hea-  
“ venly and eternal Happiness, contained in the  
“ *Promise*, and confirmed by the *Oath* of Al-  
“ mighty God, have, as it was *intended by him*  
“ *in both*, that we should have the utmost Joy  
“ and Consolation of Mind in our Assurance of  
“ obtaining it.”

With respect to the Security which *Abraham*,  
to whom the Promise was first made, had of the  
Performance of it, I said, ‘ in the Sermon, that it

before done: For I hope Mr. M. doth not mean, by Liberty in  
God, a Freedom either to *approve*, or *do* any Thing evil.  
By the Perfection of his Nature he wills *all* that is good; and  
he can will *nothing* but what is so. Evil plainly ariseth from  
a *Will* contrary to his, and is a Departure from his Constitution  
and Order of Things. So that it is no part of God’s Excellency  
and Glory, that he could chuse, and commit Evil, but doth not  
as we may do; no, his Glory consisteth in being infinitely  
perfect and good in his Nature, that *cannot* commit Iniquity,  
*cannot* lie, *cannot* change. *Rem.* pag. 22,

2 *Serm.* pag. 25.

*ariseth*

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ariseb not from the Will of God alone (meaning meer Will and sole Pleasure) but in as much as he knew it was, in it self, a reasonable and righteous Action to keep Promise, and naturally wicked for no Cause to break it; and that such was the Rectitude of the divine Will, as preserves him from acting inconsistent with the Nature and Reason of Things, therefore he might safely rely on it. In answer to this, it is said, <sup>d</sup> Mr. M's Account of Abraham's Security here, is fallacious, because it is an arguing from a subsequent or collateral Security, as if it were the main and principal one. The Security I argue from, is the Reasonableness of the Action, and the Rectitude of the divine Will. But to what other Security is this subsequent, or collateral? Will he say, that the main and principal Security arises from meer Will and arbitrary Pleasure alone? If he does, he is to shew what is the Security which that affords. Or if he says, that the main and principal Security arises from the Perfection of the divine Nature, it has been sufficiently consider'd above. The eternal Fitness, or Reasonableness of the Action, and the unalterable Rectitude of the Divine Will, taken together, is with me, I own, not a subsequent or collateral Security, but the main and principal, nay, the original and sole Security which we have, or possibly can have, of God's keeping his Promise and Oath inviolable.

There is one more Text of Scripture, I shall inquire into the Sense of, because it is what this Writer lays great Stress, and indeed, builds his whole Hypothesis upon. So far as I can gather

his Meaning, he supposes the moral Perfections of God to be so many Properties or Attributes, naturally inhering in his Essence or Substance, and necessarily flowing from it, in the same manner as his natural Attributes of Power, Knowledge, and Eternity. That these moral Attributes are the Counsellors of his Will, which always acts conformable to the Counsel that they give. For thus he expresses himself: *Since from this Account of God it must follow, that he can do nothing by meer Will or Power, separate from his other Perfections, or inconsistent with any one of them, it is therefore carefully to be observed, and strictly to be kept to, that he worketh all Things according to the Counsel of his Will. This should cut off all Arguings and Talks of arbitrary Power, when we speak of the Will of God, since his Will ought never to be separated from those infinitely perfect Counsels, in which the Harmony of all the divine Attributes, is the Rule of Action to the Almighty. Thus again: They are in the right, who derive all moral Obligation from the Will of God, including all those Perfections of God that form his Counsel. And thus he speaks throughout his Remarks, of God's infinite moral Perfections, giving Counsels to his Will, and his Will's receiving and acting by them. And all this he seems to build upon those Words of the Apostle, Eph. i. 11. In whom also we have obtained an Inheritance, being predestinated according to the Purpose of him, who worketh all Things after the Counsel of his own Will.*

As this is a Phrase no where to be met with in the *New Testament*, but in this Place, the Sense of it is to be determined by the Context, and Course of the Apostle's Reasoning. And when  
we



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we look into that we find that there is not the least Shadow of a Reason to fix the Sense of them, as this Writer has done. The Counsel of his Will not signifying *Counsel, Advice, or Direction* given by his moral Attributes to his Will, but the *Purpose, Resolution, or Decree*, formed freely by, and proceeding originally from his Will. The Apostle is speaking of the rich and free Grace of God, in calling the *Gentiles* to a Participation of the Gospel, and entirely ascribes it to his own free and voluntary Purpose, and when he describes God as *working all Things by the Counsel of his own Will*, he seems, as Calvin judiciously expounds him, to exclude all Merit or Desert in the *Gentiles* as inducing him thereto; or as Mr. Locke explains this Phrase, God is described herein, as one *who will do what he purposes, without asking the Counsel or Consent of the Jews, or whether they consent to it or no*. The Word here rendered *Counsel*, when it is applied to God in the *New Testament*, never signifies any thing but the *Decree, Purpose, Resolution, or Pleasure* of his Will. And accordingly it is rendered in this Place by *Castellio* and *Vorstius* *ex voluntatis suæ arbitrato*; by *Erasmus*, *Malanibon*, and others, *secundum decretum voluntatis suæ*; and Mr. Locke has paraphrased the Words thus; "In whom we became his Possession, and the Lot of his Inheritance, being pre-determined thereunto, according to the Purpose of him who never fails to bring to pass what he has *posed within himself*." I have met with no christian Writer who has ever given this Sense of the *Counsel of God's Will*, which is here so confidently taken for granted, and has so great a Stress laid upon it. And I am in some doubt, whether *Preacher or People will find any good Account in*  
such

such a Method of commenting and explaining Scripture.

And if this Hypothesis were true, and this the Sense of the Apostle's Words; it would utterly destroy the Doctrine of *Free Grace*. For the Election or Chusing of any Person or People to enjoy the Gospel, is always represented in the *New Testament*, as a Matter of entire *Freedom* and *Favour* in God, arising originally from his *Will*; whereas if it was first formed in this supposed Council, and proceeded from this *Harmony* of the divine Attributes, necessarily influencing the divine *Will* to this Action of electing any Person or People to the Enjoyment of the Gospel; it cannot be an *Effect* of that *Free Grace* or *Favour* in God, which he might have withheld or bestowed at his Pleasure, which yet the Scripture ever ascribes it to. God is made by this Hypothesis to act necessarily and not freely in this Case, not from the *Freedom* and *Favour* of his *Will*, but from the united *Counsels* of all his Attributes which his *Will* necessarily conforms to. It is not becoming me, to say the Remarket shall never be able to get rid of this Consequence, But I believe he will find some small Difficulty in doing it.

I have thus done what I thought necessary to clear this Argument, and vindicate what I had preached and wrote.

There are many *Miss-representations* and injurious *Reflexions*, many *Instances* of an assumed Authority, and contemptuous Treatment, in the Remarks; which I was very unwilling to make  
K
such

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such a Reply to, as I think they would have justified. I would rather overlook and forgive, than return an Injury ; and yet it has been my Observation, I own, and I think I could easily make it appear. *That many and great are the Evils which have always sprung, and do yet spring in the christian Church, from a too great Tenderness to the Frailties and Weaknesses of such who in other Respects deserve highly to be esteemed of it.*

**F I N I S**

### ERRATA.

**P**AGE 15. line 19. for Hope and Enjoyments, read hoped Enjoyment. Page 35. Margin, line *antepenult.* for natura read natura. Page 47. line 8. for nor is at, read nor is it at.





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